

Features

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Completing the Circle

Jennifer Polanz



We ran a news item in the April issue about Kevin Espiritu, founder and CEO of Epic Gardening, purchasing Botanical Interests, a seed company that has long provided quality seeds to independent retailers. I reached out to Kevin to learn more about why he did it, how it will affect IGCs and what retailers can expect in the future. Turns out, purchasing the company was coming full circle for Kevin.

JP: How did the purchase of Botanical Interests come about?

KE: We have loved the Botanical Interests brand for a very long time. In fact, their Marketmore cucumber seeds were the first seeds I ever planted! When we heard that Curtis [Jones] and Judy [Seaborn] were considering retirement and the business was up for sale, we humbly threw our hat in the ring and hoped for the best. We were fortunate enough to be selected as the stewards of the business in the future.

JP: Did you know Curtis and Judy before you bought Botanical Interests?

KE: I didn't know them personally, although I knew of them. But when we went out and met them after we'd started the process of bidding for the business, we connected strongly with them on our shared mission of teaching the world to grow.

JP: Why did you think it was a good fit?

KE: Botanical Interests simply has the best brand in the seed packet world, bar none. Of course, I've grown with Botanical Interests seeds for over a decade now and all of our customers here at Epic Gardening love them, too! We want to be there for the complete growing journey with our customers from seed to harvest and we did not have anything we could offer by way of seed—Botanical Interests was truly a good fit in that way.

JP: What can IGCs expect with the changeover of ownership? Will there be any added benefits for IGCs based on the change?

KE: More opportunities, both in terms of products and support! We have incredible new lines of product with our American Tray Company seed starting line, our Birdies Raised Beds, our Epic Grow Bag line and many other lines

to come. We believe they'll do really well in the IGC marketplace and we look forward to helping bring those new lines to our IGC partners.

We would also like to profile and feature IGCs with tours on our media. So there are more opportunities, more content support, more wholesale support and more product lines to offer—and this all translates to more foot traffic and more sales for the IGCs themselves.

JP: What would you like IGCs to know about you and your company, Epic Gardening?

KE: I was that first-time customer that walks into your nursery and has no clue what they're doing. That's where I was 10 years ago when I walked into an Armstrong Gardens location with my brother and decided to grow cucumbers and basil. I know exactly what it's like to be a beginner. I didn't grow up gardening, so I know the demographic in this new wave of gardeners—I've been there.

Epic Gardening's mission is to teach the world to grow. What we want to do is to get people to go in and connect with their nurseries and garden center teams and learn and understand how to grow plants themselves. We want to inspire a sense of community-building and garden-building alongside the IGCs.

Traditionally, the garden center is a cultural third space for gardeners. That's where I learned a lot in the early days and the same can be said for almost every newbie gardener. I have a lot of respect for IGCs and we want to pay homage to that and keep that space alive and vibrant for all of the new gardeners we are educating with our vast online content presence.

JP: What do you think IGCs could do to better reach potential gardeners around them? What channels do you find work best to reach people who love plants?

KE: I feel that IGCs would be best served by picking someone from their nursery who they want to be the "face" of their nursery or garden center. Have that person start to communicate directly with their customers on Instagram, TikTok and YouTube. That's where people are these days and where people discover new places, people and businesses. Pick your most fun, charismatic personality and empower them to communicate with your local community.

JP: What are some of your favorite new gardening products?

KE: At the risk of sounding biased, I love the new models of Birdies beds that are coming out through us, which are our shapes range and our new colors, as well as our new tray line and grow bags!

Beyond that, I'm a big fan of the Cobrahead weeder. I'm also excited about some of the new Felco hand tools that just got released—they've produced a line of tools with red-stained wooden handles that look great. **GP**

Where to Find Kevin

Kevin Espiritu has authored two books, "Field Guide to Urban Gardening: How to Grow Plants, No Matter Where You Live" and "Grow Bag Gardening: The Revolutionary Way to Grow Bountiful Vegetables, Herbs, Fruits, and Flowers in Lightweight, Eco-friendly Fabric Pots." He currently lives in San Diego, California, on his Epic Homestead.

His socials are:

YouTube: youtube.com/c/epicgardening

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Podcasts: epicgardening.com/podcast

Blog: epicgardening.com

Epic Gardening Store: shop.epicgardening.com

Botanical Interests: botanicalinterests.com

Facebook Group: facebook.com/groups/epicgardening

Discord: discord.gg/epicgardening