



Success Magazine: Ben, when did your family start Shaker Shed, LLC?

Ben Brizzell: My family started the Shaker Shed Farm Market in 1974. At that time the farm was run by my grandfather, Paul Coleman, and he allowed my parents to sell pansies and other flowers from a wagon near Watervliet Shaker Road. Soon thereafter my father built a small “shed” in order to expand their product line, and it continued to grow from there.

SM: What made you decide to join the family business?

BB: As a boy I always thought I would get a college degree, land some hot job, and be set for life. I watched my parents work their butts off and thought, “That’s not for me. I can do better.” So I worked at some decent, but not great, jobs for over a decade and even lived in Florida for two years. But something was missing, and as I grew from a boy into a man I realized that my parents had it right all along. What they were doing with the Shaker Shed business was not even a job to them; it was their way of life and they loved it, no matter how hard they had to work. When the business went

up for sale, I couldn’t imagine anybody else running it, so my sister and I worked out a deal with our parents prior to the current season and decided to give it a go.

SM: What roles do you and your sister play in the managing of your business?

BB: Laura handles many of the duties that my mother took care of such as employee scheduling, decorating and arranging the store, managing day-to-day operations—she can really do just about anything, from making a sandwich when the café gets busy to running the cash register when there is a line of customers out the door. It is nice to be partners with someone who is not only my sister but also very knowledgeable about the business. I, like my father, am more behind the scenes. I take care of the greenhouses, work in the fields, and do the bookkeeping. Those are big shoes to fill though—it isn’t something I can learn in one season, but I do my best.

SM: What makes your business, “a little country in Colonie”?

BB: As a child growing up on the farm, Colonie was a much more serene place. We

lived on a moderately quiet road and there were fields and trees all around. Now, where my grandfather once grew corn and tomatoes, there is a four lane highway that stretches all the way to the Shaker Shed. Not that I have anything against progress, but sometimes I believe people long for a return to simpler times. In a way, you can find that here while browsing flowers in our greenhouse or homegrown produce in the store, or even going on a hayride in October.

SM: What makes your business different from other suppliers of your kind?

BB: Our customers have told us they enjoy shopping in our store because we provide more personal service and have a higher quality and variety of products. This is a family business and, as owners, either Laura or I are always here—and if not one or both of us, our parents are. I don’t think that in any big box stores you are going to find the owners working alongside the employees.

SM: What future plans do you have for enhancing Shaker Shed, LLC?

BB: Since this is our first year running the business, Laura and I are still taking in the whole experience. Our business is very season oriented, and with every change of season brings a new challenge to learn and grow from. I think once we have at least a year or two under our belts we will be better equipped to make decisions about where we want to take the business in the future ... although I’m already thinking about growing new and exciting varieties of plants for the next flower season!


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945 Watervliet Shaker Rd | Albany, NY 12205
at the intersection of Sand Creek Rd.
ph: 518-869-3662