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CHRONIC

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CANNAJOBS

Thinking about dipping your toes into the cannabis job market?

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FISH SHIT
INTERVIEW



GreenBroz

PROTOTYPING EFFICIENCY



IT'S NOT LABORADOR THIS TIME:

FISH SHIT!

INTERVIEW



BY CHYNNA PEARSON



PHOTOS: FISH SH!T Facebook Page

It's not every day that I get to do an interview and get to swear. Recently, my editor gave me the opportunity to speak with Tom of Fish Sh!t. Yep, you heard that right!

Fish Sh!t is an East Coast business that crafts the most robust beneficial bacteria on the market, at their very own fish farm in. Their website claims that it can increase crop yield up to 20%, increase flavor profiles, and increase the number of nutrients the plants can uptake.

Chronic Magazine: Good afternoon! Thank you for doing this interview! I'm super excited to get to speak with you.

Tom: Thank you for having me!

Chronic: So, I'd like to start with where are you based? When did your state legalize? Basically, tell me all about you.

Tom: All right, so okay. So, where am I? So I'm based out of Rhode Island, the company straddles Rhode Island and Massachusetts. Our fish farm is in Rehoboth, Massachusetts, and our corporate offices are in East Providence, Rhode Island. Rhode Island, how I got my foot in the door, legalized in 2007. I don't wanna say legalized but, planned for medicinal cannabis in a caregiver program.

Similar to that in Oklahoma but, not, ya know, licensing but individual grow rights. So, we went in '07 and I immediately started cultivating for a friend of mine who was suffering from muscular dystrophy and that's how I got into this.

Massachusetts, on the other hand, went for medicinal in 2011 and my other partner David got his license to cultivate medically, I wanna say, in 2014. That's when we both kind of stepped into the whole cultivation side of this world.

Tom: Well, I mean, look. There were grumblings here in 2005 that we were gonna go medicinal. Colorado, I believe, was already chatting about medicinal and recreational. I think we went medical a few years before Colorado went recreational. We were the 11th state to have some sort of medicinal or recreational program on the books, right? At that point in time, it was almost starting to become cool.

I think the facts that we changed, or when... First off, we are very small so we are a blip on the map to everybody, but when we got our right to grow in the patient program we got overshadowed by Colorado being the first state to go legal, right? They just took all the spotlight. We got put on the backburner. I think here on the cultivation side we got at it a lot earlier than everybody else did.

A lot of good folks in the industry now come from the East Coast, specifically Rhode Island and Massachusetts because we were early adaptors. Even in Maine, the community is strong Maine too.

And when I think of a market area, ya know, obviously we are individual states and entities but New England as a whole has got a growing marijuana community similar to Colorado and Oklahoma. Ya know, when you look at the licenses and just population and density of similar populations, big cities, and woody areas. We just have different rules too. I never thought we would see the mass legalization like there was in Maine.

But, to get back to your question, I didn't see it growing as big as it did. (laughs)
Definitely not.

Chronic: So, you're in the cultivation side of the cannabis industry. Why cultivation and not like a dispensary?

Tom: Actually, we are not on the cultivation side. We are actually a beneficial bacteria that helps cultivators. I personally come from the cultivation world. I did all the testing of the products, I am one of the investors of the product.

So what I do is I go out to different facilities and I help them to understand the best practices for my product and their environment.

So I started cultivating in 2007 in the patient-caregiver program. I didn't really want to go into the cultivation or dispensary side of it because here in Rhode Island, our licensing program is dramatically different than, let's say, in Oklahoma. In Oklahoma, they release 6,000 different licenses, here, we only have 120.



So, not having the political clout or the capital to chase that, I just decided that the best course of action was to go into the “picks and shovel” kind of side of things. Having the background and knowledge from the cultivation side now is just a bonus.

Now when I go in, I am able to speak and attest to how everything works in the dispensary.

I actually participated in some smaller facilities here in New England and got to become pretty great friends with some of the business owners and hydroponic shop owners here.

When it was time to launch the product in 2015, it was a pretty easy sell for me to go around to different stores and say, “Hey listen, I got this great product! I think it's gonna work.

What do you think?” That's how we kind of got started because my foot was already in the door due to cultivation.

I do some cultivation now, but it is more on a microscale just to test. So as we see different products, nutrients, media, come online or in the market, it was one of my jobs to take, look at, and evaluate our product's effectiveness compared to the rest on the market.

That's why a lot of the products you see out there and different growing styles, I've either used, set up, or have first-hand knowledge working with.

Chronic: Awesome. So... Fish Shit. Where and how did you figure out that was something that would work?

Tom: I did a lot of the testing. My original partner David and I had a mutual friend, our friend Kyle.

He was actually one of David's students, his high school biology and chemistry students. Kyle was a good friend of mine, he was the gentleman that I mentioned I got my card for.

When he got out of high school, I was acquainted with his then teacher and stayed buddies. We just used to go on silly adventures, horror conventions, comic book conventions, Dungeons and Dragons conventions, stuff like that. We all become buddies and David knew I was already into cultivation, at that time.

When Kyle passed away, David approached me, knowing I was Kyle's caregiver, and said, “Hey, listen. I just got my license to cultivate in Massachusetts on the medicinal level. I'd love for you to come up to the farm and check out what I got going on and my side gig, yadda yadda yadda.



” If you knew Dave’s quirky personality, you only knew that it was gonna be a recipe or trouble or fun, right?

I got to the farm in a very cliché fashion and when I walk in there are two rows of marijuana, right? Back then it was “green crack.” One row was about three feet high, the other row was about four feet high. Immediately I said, “Dave, what gives? They’re all obviously the same plant, they are all the same strain, right? So, what’s the difference?”

David says, “Well, I give this one a powdered amendment, and I give this one the powdered amendment and a little concoction that I pulled from the tank.”

“Well geez Dave, you’ve got a product here!” It was all very cliché like when you pull out a napkin and that’s where you jotted down the million-dollar idea. Dave pulls out the very first bottle of Fish Sh!t and on the label is a hand-drawn fish, sitting on a toilet.

I go, “Holy shit, dude, you’ve got a product.” He says [in a deep, gruff voice], “I call it Fish Sh!t, you want in?” And from that point on we were working together.

I was working IT at the time, and it was all I could think about. “How do we get this to market?”

We knew we needed money so I would actually take my commission check on a Wednesday to order bottles, pay for the bottles, do a one-day ship, order labels, slap the labels on, go to the farm, fill up the bottles and run out. We did that for a little while. Eventually, we attracted the attention of an investor, one of our partners now, I told him the story and he was sold. He came in the next day and said, “I thought about this all night, I’m in.”

The investor brought on our sales guy, Joe, and just recently we gained a new partner, We brought in a CEO to come and kind of steer this whole ship and take us to new markets faster and grow the company faster.

And that’s where we are to date. We all have our distinct roles too.

Chronic: How did you meet my editor, Therin?

Tom: How I met Therin was, I think, through a facility in Oklahoma that I had gone into and had given some pointers and just a referral.

He approached me and I thought, “Hey, ya know what? This is a super cool opportunity. I’d love to do the interview.”

Chronic: I’m glad y’all met! I had no idea fish excrement was any good for cultivation. Well, I knew other animals poop can act as fertilizer but fish? Crazy! Is it easy to cultivate the products needed to make Fish Sh!t? I know you are close to water, but still.

Tom: Let me give you the rundown, so first off, we have a lot of different varieties of tilapia, right? Inside of the tilapia’s digestional tract, you have very robust bacterial profiles, right?

That’s on the aquatic food map. What we do is we take the aquatic bacteria and deliver it to the soil food web.

Although Fish Sh!t has no NPK, NPK resides in the soil food web and NPK. NPK needs to be broken down for the plant to take up, it cannot be taken up in its raw form. This is where Fish Sh!t comes in and does its job.

What we act like is a can opener, we open up the nutrient to be more bioavailable for the plant. We make it very accessible.

I like to use these real-world analogies. Think about a mommy bird chewing up food for her baby bird. It’s predigested, that’s what we are doing.

And because there are over 4500 distinct and different species of beneficial bacteria cultivate in our formulation and billions of microbes in every dose, there is something that lends itself nicely for all phases of the plant’s life cycle. It can help root growth, vegetative growth, and will help pack on oils at the end which means bigger, stinker, terp-ier, healthier-looking buds.

Basically, in every area that you are looking to improve if you’re a high-end cultivator or even a guy with four plants in a tent.

We’ve got something for all phases of a plant’s life cycle. cycle. If it grows, it just grows better with Fish Sh!t!

We are unlike any other product on the market, we are completely unique. We invented the product as a group. We aren't made in a laboratory, it is made in our own greenhouses. All of the fish products are our own and no fish were hurt in the making of this product. It is 100% environmentally friendly, sustainable, all-natural, everything we give to our fish and what we use on our farm is 100% organic.

We have no heavy metals. We are also family-owned and operated. My partner Joe's son has put on about 95% of the labels that go out. Unfortunately now, we have to automate.

We've had to bring our first machine in because we can't keep up with sales. I give out about 12,000 samples a month.

Chronic: That's incredible. Did you expect the company to grow as fast as it is?

Tom: No, I didn't. Well, ya know, you always dream of it, right? You say, "Wow, I've got lightning in a bottle here! How do we take advantage of it?" Did I always hope?

Yes, of course. I think at a certain point in time I realized, I looked back at where we were and part of our office was my house and storage was my partner's basement.

Everyone was working full-time jobs, too. One by one we realized we all needed to have all hands on deck, we were growing fast. It went from being in Maine and Massachusetts to Guam and Scotland overnight.

We are in Canada, and in every state in the country now, not just the continental US but Alaska and Hawaii too.

We are now breaking into the Caribbean where the legality has changed. We are just all over the place and have a lot of fun doing it too.

Chronic: Y'all have done amazing. I'm guessing you've needed to get more and more fish as time went on too?

Tom: We do! Yep, we do. We absolutely do. We culture our own bacteria, everything we do is crafted.

There is a rhyme and reason to everything we do here, we have our own proprietary process we use. So, yeah. We have a lot of pet fish. (laughs)

Chronic: Wow. It is just wild how you went from working from basements to being available all over the globe. Was fish the first option in this fertilizer business?

Tom: Listen, this happened completely by accident. So, David owns an aquaponics farm, a USDA certified aquaponics farm.

He was farm to table to high-end, organic restaurants, for restaurants that wanted fresh vegetables, right? One of the reasons David got out of it was because once we realized this worked so tremendously on cannabis, the fish that were helping to produce lettuce, romaine, and arugula, he just didn't have the channels of distribution. He basically stumbled across this. It was nearly immediately that I realized we had something special here.

He basically stumbled across this. It was nearly immediately that I realized we had something special here.

I owned a hydroponic shop and you see a lot of good products come... well actually, well-marketed products come and go. The fact that we worked so well and had a great name and brand recognition helped so much.

We have a van, covered in the logo and all sorts of other crazy shit. People see us and can say, 'Oh, I know you!' The fact that it works well, is all-natural, and has a really fun, catchy name, it was an awesome recipe for us to just take off.

Chronic: Now that's a happy accident!

Tom: Oh, it was a happy accident for sure! (laughs) A super happy accident!

Speaking with Tom about Fish Sh!t was a great time. I had no idea there were so many different kinds of good bacteria. While we spoke, Tom mentioned how loving and family-oriented the company is. Apparently, they just got a new pool table in lieu of a new conference room. Everyone voted and it was clear, the pool table was a go! They have an incredibly fun work environment, competitive too, and Tom says, "I just talk a lot of fish shit" around the pool table. The family environment extends from their headquarters to their customers all over the world.

It was a pleasure speaking with Tom.



PHOTO: FISH SH!T Facebook Page

Check out www.FishHeadFarms.com for any other information on Fish Sh!t.