

“Carrying On Tradition:”

Perrin Family Farm Keeping the Family Legacy Alive



Tucked away behind a locked gate, just a short jaunt from downtown Ukiah, Perrin Family Farm is an award-winning cannabis farm that embodies the spirit, grit and heart of the Mendocino County Cannabis community.

Perrin Family Farm is a cottage garden growing 25 exceptional plants. Owning the beautiful, south-facing ridgeline property that comprises the farm is a welcome benefit after years of living rough, paying dues and making tremendous sacrifices as a cannabis farmer. Hard work and good fortune resulted in Russell capturing 19th place in the 2018 Emerald Cup and producing year after year of commendable flower.

“Who would have ever thought I’d be a dad growing weed?” Russell grins. Hailing from the North Georgia mountains, Russell’s father was seeking clean cannabis and became part of the “Grow Your Own” movement that was just gaining momentum five

decades ago. In the ‘70’s, people were seeking clean food and medicine. There were lots of veterans, including Russell’s father, who were also seeking remedies for stress and PTSD. “The anti-marijuana campaigns would spray Paraquat on cannabis, which led to more backyard grows and small enterprises in the rural areas, all in an effort to be able to consume clean, chemical-free cannabis,” he explains.

“I remember when weed was flat as a squashed lizard on pavement from being compacted in bales made by household kitchen trash compactors,” Russell recalls. The Grow Your Own movement finally gave the flower a three-dimensional look that had not been seen by many users in the south.” Russell’s commitment to sound gardening practices is rooted in what he saw in the early days of cannabis, and his experience growing up in an agrarian area.

“Dad used to grow behind the ‘corn blind’ in the corn fields. He called his weed ‘Big Bamboo.’ Of course, it was easy to spot from the air, so he went from growing in the ground to pots- to control the height and girth of the plants, and later, he headed to the edge of the woods to conceal it.” It was little later on when helicopter surveillance came into practice. This led to more experimenting with indoor growing, for greater safekeeping over sungrown.

“I remember being on the mountain logging firewood. I was about 18. Dad said, ‘Son, I think you know what this is,’ as he fished a joint out of his cigarette pack. That was the first time I smoked with my dad - a very memorable event that was a bonding moment in our relationship.”





Russell had grown up around hard work, family values, and stewardship of the land. He worked in a variety of interesting jobs from a young age- working as farm hand on a blueberry farm, Christmas tree sales, being a whitewater rafting guide, professional chef, scooter shop owner and construction worker.

“The financial crisis hit, and there were massive layoffs in every sector.” Like many people, Russell was hit hard. So, looking for opportunity, “I had a buddy setting up greenhouses in California. I got a \$400 loan for gas and drove up to a farm near Cow Mountain from Tucumcari. We lived up there with the greenhouses during the Lightning Complex Fires. That summer, it was between 110 and 114 degrees- every day, for about a month. I’d have to drive to McDonald’s in Ukiah to get internet access. I enjoyed camping in a tent, but then when fall came and that fog started rolling in, I was so grateful I had enough money to buy a camper,” he smiles.

Russell lived in his camper in the wilds for five years, pulling tarps and growing cannabis. He also worked for Redtail Farms nursery in Potter Valley for his weekly paycheck, until fate intervened, and he met the love of his life.

“We were like goofy teenagers,” Russell smiles. “We got pregnant in our 40’s, which was the best thing that ever happened to me.”

It was worth all the ordeals when the family got established in the Calpella area, where they live today in a fantastic home with plenty of room for the cottage garden.

“I was buying clones in Humboldt and visiting farms as a trimmer in Shelter Cove and Spy Rock. It was all very intriguing. I got my medical marijuana card from Dr. Hopkins, and two years before the passage of Prop 64, I bought zip ties from the Sheriff. It was a historic moment for me. I remember the Sheriff thanking me, saying, ‘I appreciate what you’re doing.’”

From there, Russell took his years of toil and trouble and turned them into green magic. The property is a combination of thriving cannabis, vegetable and flower gardens, compactly aligned with the south-facing edge of the property, which graces visitors with an entirely unique and picturesque view of the Ukiah Valley.

Mobile, moveable chicken coops greet visitors as you enter Russell’s garden. “We call this place the ‘Ruberbs,’” he laughs, meaning “Rural Suburbs.” It is very pastoral, yet convenient for





school, work, shopping, and community. “I just drive down my hill and I can meet my kids at the bus stop,” Russell notes.

Greens, cauliflower and a bevy of winter vegetables line the garden beds. “We’ve gone five years without major amendments other than cover crops. I’ve used some biochar and bulk worm castings, and that’s about it. Our goal is to do no-till farming.”

Russell uses a well and water catchment, to water his plants. He grows his cannabis in one long bed, and his soil is dark, rich and fragrant. He started out growing clones but is slowly transitioning to seeds.

His spotless trimming and processing building is located just a few steps away from the garden, with a high ceiling for drying and walls filled with family memorabilia. Every once in a while, he thinks about putting in a charging station, and becoming a cannabis “stopover” for folks who could plug in, light up and enjoy the garden and spectacular view. “I’ve got all the handicap access handled, and it seems like it would be a pretty nice way to wait for your vehicle to charge up,” he smiles.



Russell’s farm logo is based upon a historic Grange poster- one that is part of his ancestral farming legacy and history. In his updated version, the crops, lined up in rows, have been replaced with the familiar shapes of cannabis leaves.

Russell’s logo says, “Carrying on Tradition,” which replaces the Granger’s credo of “Faith, Hope, Charity and Fidelity.” However, those four words couldn’t be better descriptions of the dedication, love and commitment that exemplifies every aspect of Russell’s family farm.

Perrin Family Farm entered Forbidden Fruit in the Kure Mendocino Invitational. Visit them on Facebook, Instagram, and at their [website](#).



Written and Edited by Carole Brodsky for Kure Mendocino