

## The “Root” Cause:

Silver Dragon Farms follows the land, the plant and a personal mission



David Silverstone is quick to explain that the name of his farm is not just because of his family name.

“Silver Dragon is the name of this land,” says David. “Right now, we’re standing on the tail of the Dragon, and as we walk, we’ll travel along the spine and curve around to the head of the Dragon. The land is a dragon,” David explains. “Its shape and energy revealed itself to me as part of an ayahuasca vision- two days before seeing the property for the first time. The ‘silver’ comes from my family name, so the combination creates the name of the brand.”

David was raised in California by British parents. His father was involved in real estate, which segued into David’s own experience as a broker and helped inform his understanding of land and land use. His father was involved in the development of the Brooktrails Township, Shelter Cove

and Hidden Valley Lake in Grass Valley.

“My Dad took me around to all these places as a child while developing them for community.” He saw first-hand how difficult it was for the Back to the Land dream to remain sustainable.

Silver Dragon is a place all its own, redolent with ancient, ancestral and primal energy that shaped and formed the land. And David, the multi-award-winning cannabis farmer fortunate enough to be its caretaker understands that energy, working with the geomantic and topographic forces that makes Silver Dragon such a compelling place.

It’s been an amazing journey for David, who made the unlikely transition from a Hollywood prop man, art and set director and producer to a Los Angeles real estate broker with Coldwell Banker. From there, David became a permaculture designer and today is celebrated as a master cannabis farmer.

“I walked away from my previous life to get a permaculture degree, and now work full-time to do my part regenerating the earth,” he explains. “I saw the Matrix- not the film- the actual, energetic grid over our planet, and I knew I had to get away- to leave Babylon,” he smiles.





Mendocino wildlands are generally, well, wild. And cannabis farms- even “sustainable” ones are often “cut and pasted” atop a hillside with some, but not much regard for the surrounding landscape. But walking the land with David is like walking through a conscious wildland, where enormous stands of manzanita have been gently but significantly cut back, revealing the natural contours of the land. Hugelkultur raised bed mounds can be seen everywhere- enormous, snaking rows of brush, placed into long rows in preparation to be turned into beds that will complement, not compete with the existing landscape.

“I’ve lived and gardened here for 13 seasons, and prior to that, the property was owned by Gabby, the former owner of the Garden Sprout in Willits,” he explains. The property, located between northern Redwood Valley and Willits sits on a geological bubble- a verdant, water-filled “dragon” that is home to peach, pomegranate, plum and cherry trees, as well as a vegetable garden growing amidst the cannabis.

David lives simply and basically and still showers in his beautiful outside tub/shower located on the deck.

“I reside wherever the plants allow me to- sometimes on the couch, sometimes in the yards, sometimes in a vehicle. I move where they need me to, since there is no permanent cabin or residence here.”

“I lived in a trailer at the top of the garden for three years, sleeping in an outside hammock and eating mostly out of the garden.” The trailer served as his office and provided relief from the elements. “That same year, the choppers were flying over. I built a stick and hay bale yurt and lived in that for the next four to five years.”

David’s refrigerator, located underneath a tall awning, has been “bear-proofed” for obvious reasons. “I live like a monk,” he smiles, and not ironically, befriended monks at the nearby Holy Transfiguration monastery, including Father Tim, who lived on the land with David for several years. At one point, David even made the conscious decision to sacrifice romantic relationships in higher service to the plants and the land.

David is committed to staying small, focusing on fostering the regenerative practices on his farm, which he believes translates directly to those who consume his cannabis. “Regenerative agriculture is not just







about farming. It's a way of life- repairing our broken system through what we eat, what we purchase." He is acutely aware of those who continue to mangle in prison for cannabis-related offenses, and how putting clean, organic, safe cannabis into one's body is of the utmost importance.

"My permaculture teachers were students of Bill Mollison. We learned by example. I was remodeling a house in the Hollywood Hills, and we did the permaculture design course right there, putting a food forest in the backyard. We became design-certified over a number of weeks."

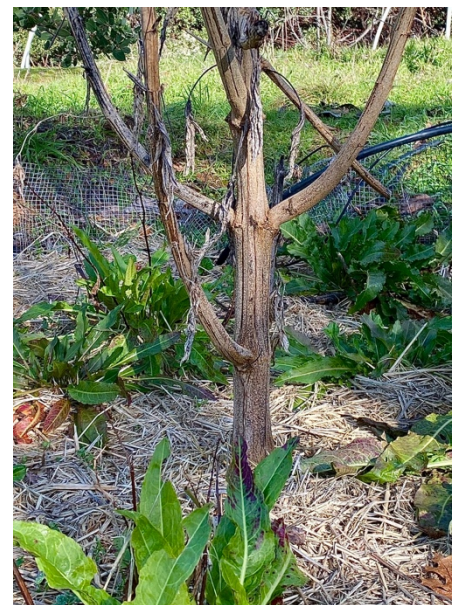
David has had his share of challenges becoming a legal farmer.

"Law enforcement had already seen the greenhouses in the area. I was unintentionally sucked into a raid that got Beau Bergdahl," says David, referring to the soldier held captive by the Taliban for six years. Bergdahl was visiting a farm that bordered Silver Dragon. "There were reporters at the bottom of my gate. I was sent a bill for \$30,000 for the cost of shredding my weed. People thought I was growing for the Taliban." Following that incident, David began the arduous process of becoming a legal farm.

David still grows in one of the original garden sites, and has expanded into another sunny, flatter area. "I do two mixed-light harvests per year- about 4,000 square feet, annually." He starts from seed, moves his own autoflower into the greenhouse, then to the backyard into 3-gallon pots and finally, out to the gardens, using biodynamic and organic practices for all aspects of his farm.

Some of David's strains trace their origins to Afghan Goo. The indica "Goo" grown in Mendocino County was valued by consumers as both flower and hash. He was part of the southern Ukiah Mandelbrot family of farmers and became a member of the Biodynamic Association of Northern California. He began to study the work of Rudolf Steiner and biodynamic farming, incorporating those principles and the biodynamic calendar into his farming practices. "Steiner felt that biodynamics helped to imprint a cosmic message into the plants," David explains.

David leaves his cannabis stalks in the ground to overwinter. "The roots of the young plants love to find their way using the path of the previous plants."





“Fertilizer is pretty ridiculous,” says David, who makes his own unique compost tea, chock full of diverse elements directly from the land. “I use manzanita berries, fermented fruit juice, mash that up, add some brown sugar and let it ferment. Anyone can create elixirs, tinctures and tonics from plants and fungi right from the land.”

Today, David is the holder of many legacy strains, and like his colleagues, has more questions than answers about what to do about his genetics. “For people like me, we do not know what to do with them. I’ve had run-ins with my share of sharks who I entrusted with my strains.” With no clear pathway for farmers to patent or copyright their genetics, David and other cannabis genetics experts face an unsolvable quandary. “I’ve let a whole bunch of my genetics go, but some made it out there to Hawaii, Spain, Costa Rica and Brazil.” His ties with the international

trimmigrant community helped build his brand beyond the California border, but in these challenging times, what was once a crew of 10-20 harvest helpers is trimmed down to about 6.

In addition to the plants, David lives with a group of rescue animals he deeply loves- the survivors of a long-standing feral cat community, several pigs and horses. Like his sister Alicia, he is devoted to bringing kindness and care to abused and neglected animals and is grateful he has a location where they can live out their days in peace.

David will never veer from his dedication to do what he can to sustain the earth, the water, the animals and the spirits residing on his land.



“Who do you want growing your weed?” asks David. “Corporate cannabis mega-grows or farmers who are healing the planet- helping our damaged earth? These are choices we can make.”



Silver Dragon Farm won 5th place at the 2016 Emerald Cup, 3<sup>rd</sup> place at the 2017 WeedCon, and 1<sup>st</sup> place at the 2018, 2019 and 2020 Jack Herer Cup. The farm entered Jelly Roll into the Kure Mendocino Invitational. Visit Silver Dragon Farm on Facebook, Instagram and the [website](#).

*Written and Edited by Carole Brodsky For Kure Mendocino*