

GREEN VALLEY GROWERS



At 93, Guido Piccinini moves well, spending his days aiding farmhands, fishing out of his own privately stocked ponds and even motoring the occasional tractor across his family's Lutherville lands.

"Ehhh...I'm just old," he said with a shrug and a smile, scuttling about Green Valley Growers - an industrial-sized hemp estate run by three generations of Piccininis.

Born into a village vineyard in Northern Italy, Guido left his native lands in 1967 to begin a new life in Montreal.

"At first, we don't talk English, but we know how to say, 'One beer! Ten cents!'" he laughed.

For 14 years, he and his wife Enrica worked tirelessly, amassing enough wealth to relocate to Maryland in 1982 and purchase the 34.4 acres of land Guido is in the midst of patrolling for a 39th season.

"He used to be out here from sunrise to about 10 o'clock at night," said Mario Piccinini, one of Guido's two sons.

"It keeps him young," added his youngest son, Vincent Piccinini. "He's 93 and he's self-sufficient. He's down here at 5:30 every morning and he has an agenda. He's gotta get up and feed the chickens. He wants to go look at the hemp and make sure the plants are good. It inspires all of us."

Like Guido's ponds, the buildings on the estate are well-stocked.

Vincent runs the operation, overseeing production of 10 acres of hemp flower growth, while the remaining 24.4 acres maintains some of its previous roots in nursery growth (citrus, maple and birch trees). He estimates that the family is holding onto over 11,000 pounds of CBD flower between Lutherville and another operation on the Eastern Shore. Vincent says they are waiting for the market to "self-correct" and wants to find the partners who have the patients' best interests at heart.

"A lot of good people are working together with state agencies, and we can make a home run here," he said. "Let's figure out how to help out the communities and the public in general."



28

Green Valley Growers began planting following the passage of a 2018 Maryland pilot program that allows the production, harvest and sale of industrial hemp.

In 2019, they began selling their product wholesale at a rate of \$1000 per pound, but quickly found themselves being squeezed out of the market by sellers at \$250-\$300 per pound - which they saw as producing products of far less medicinal value. "It's like the wild wild West," Vincent said, decrying a

lack of thorough testing.

To create a more consistent product, the Piccininis brought in Barry Pritchard of SunX Analytical. A longtime member of the pharmaceutical industry, Pritchard has made the leap into this new field, conducting analytical tests for CBD potency, THC contamination and moisture content.

He swears by the quality of Green Valley Growers' products so fervently that he began putting out his own tinctures using their products.

"I'm a pharmaceutical-trained scientist, so we try to make products that we can make the same way every time," he said.



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-GUIDO PICCININI

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TAKING FLIGHT



PROCESSING EQUIPMENT

Pritchard believes CBD is the future of pain and anxiety management, and disputes the old adage of Cannabis as a gateway drug.

"It's not the gateway to opioids," he said. "It's the gateway from the opioids. The gateway to it is pain, somebody's medicine cabinet, somebody else's medicine cabinet, heroin."

Together, they've sold over 20,000 units and have enjoyed a plethora of positive feedback.

"That's the fun part, when you hear that stuff," Vincent said. "Money makes the wheel turn, but at the end of the day hearing that people say, 'Thank you so much; my life is so much better,' that's more than money."

It also puts a smile to Guido's face, though he's happy so long as he's busy.

Enrica, his childhood sweetheart and family matriarch, passed away three years ago. Guido has mourned her loss each day, finding salvation the only way he knows how: work.

"Nobody give me nothing," the 93-year-old said. "I wanted to make something of myself. To do that, you must work. Some people don't like it, but I love to work."

That work ethic is what has helped the Piccinini's farms blossom from citrus to CBD, allowing for the family's new foray into hemp.

"Growing up, our father always taught us to work hard," Vincent said. "He taught us not to look back because you did the best you could in everything you did."

