

5 MINUTES WITH —

JARED HUGHES



Hughes holding his hybrid 'Canary Wing' begonia (an all-gold variety of the garden favorite 'Dragon Wing').

By Teresa McPherson

Jared Hughes is co-owner of Groovy Plants Ranch with his wife Liz. Jared is a GPN Magazine 40 Under 40 alumnus.

Can you share a bit about your background?

I have an associate's degree in landscape design and architecture degree from Columbus State Community College. I worked in the trade for 10 years at Foertmeyer & Sons Greenhouse Co. in Delaware, Ohio, working under Mark Foertmeyer.

About five years ago, I had the opportunity to purchase Groovy Plants Ranch (at the time it was called Fargo Herbs). It's pretty much been an amazing journey so far. I would say for the most part, I've learned through the trade.

Where did the name Groovy Plants Ranch come from?

When I was in college, I really wanted to grow some things but I was working full-time as a retail manager and also going to school full-time, so I needed something I could grow that was very easy and low-care because I didn't have much time to dedicate to a crop. That's when I discovered succulents were pretty easy to propagate and grow. They just made me think of the '60s and I've always kind of liked classic rock music, so that's where the name started. [Succulents] had a heyday back in the '60s, and they came back into popularity. So that's where it started — it started with the succulents.

What has surprised you about adding a retail store to your wholesale nursery business?

The response from the community. We picked a location in a small-town area, and the number of people who flock to the nursery surprised me. And then on top of that, this cult following that developed around it has been really staggering — I just never expected it.

I also didn't expect people to use this place we've created as almost like a meeting place for families and friends to get together, so that's been very surprising to me and really a very positive byproduct of creating this business here.

What is your biggest goal for 2021?

It's a two-part goal: I would like to improve on our sales this year, which have been astronomical for us. In addition, I have big plans for our online store. I want to greatly increase the sales through our online store, which has been going really well, and we're working very hard at it.

What do you love about your job?

I love being able to work with great people. We have an amazing staff at Groovy Plants Ranch — they're true professionals, and it's just a joy to be able to work with such great people. Also, being able to serve a community that really loves our business, it's a joy working with the consumers that we have. We have it too good.

What keeps you up at night?

In January and February, greenhouse heaters. I have a lot of stock that I maintain throughout the year, and even though I have sensors and alarms in place, I still lay up at night wondering if anything is going to shut off.

What is your favorite plant to grow?

As a gardener, my favorite plant to grow would probably be the hardy banana *Musa Basjoo*.

It grows so rapidly in the spring and summer, all the way to a hard killing freeze, and it's just a joy to grow. You start with a tiny little thing in the spring, and then by the end of the season, it could be 15 to 20 feet tall. They're very dramatic, and they're just fun to grow. I think that's probably my favorite plant to grow as a gardener. 🌸