

VIRIDE RESEARCH

PLANT SCIENCE IP CASE STUDY

Owning a cultivar: plant patents, PVP certificates, and the protection most breeders never get!

INTRODUCTION

The Viride Research Fund builds biotechnology investment strategies around botanical supply chains — the ground between raw agricultural production and pharmaceutical-grade application, where quality, distribution, and scalability are the binding constraints. Rather than taking passive positions, the fund is vertically integrated across cultivation, genetics, processing, refinement, and distribution, and refines its thesis through operating exposure rather than from a distance. That structure has produced an unusual asset mix for an investment vehicle. Alongside a cGMP extraction facility and a wholesale and retail brokerage platform, the fund controls a breeding programme: more than three thousand original crosses and landrace accessions collected over four decades, tissue-culture and tissue-ponic propagation capability, and a proprietary low-THC variety, Red Kross 02, that carries AOSCA seed certification and USDA Organic certification. In 2025 the fund's distribution platform was the subject of an acquisition agreement with Panacea Life Sciences Holdings.

BACKGROUND

A germplasm library is the most valuable and the most fragile asset a plant-science company can hold. It is valuable because it took forty years to assemble and cannot be reconstructed on demand. It is fragile because a plant, unlike a machine, reproduces itself — and the moment a certified seed lot leaves your control, so has the invention.

Overlaying all of that is hemp's particular commercial history. Varieties circulate through informal channels, are described publicly in certification filings and variety review board reports, and are sold before anyone has considered whether a filing window is running. Brand protection is equally exposed — names like Blue Kross and the fund's retail marks are registrable for hemp products at under three-tenths of a percent THC, but the same names on higher-THC goods run straight into the federal lawful-use requirement. Getting the sequencing right is the whole exercise.

“We spent ten years building the genetics. Making sure we actually own them is not a legal formality — it's the asset. PatentPC is our go-to firm to build our IP moat.”

IAN DIXON, CO-FOUNDER & CEO, VIRIDE RESEARCH FUND

LEADERSHIP



IAN DIXON

Co-founder & Chief Executive Officer, Viride Research Fund

Ian Dixon has spent roughly fifteen years in commercial hemp and cannabis licensing and has led the Viride Research Fund since 2017. In 2018 he raised more than eighteen million dollars to take an extraction operation to one of the larger production facilities in Northern California, and exited it. The fund has since raised in excess of twenty-five million dollars.

He is also a breeder. Red Kross 02, marketed as Blue Kross, was developed under his direction and entered the AOSCA Variety Review Board index in 2021 — a low-THC, oil-and-grain hemp line bred from Baxx, Finola, and Ringo's Gift with a stable cannabinoid ratio and an eighty-to-hundred-day harvest cycle. In 2025 he was named to lead Panacea Life Sciences Holdings following its agreement to acquire the fund's distribution platform.

SOLUTION

PatentPC handles filings with minimal technical assistance from the inventors. Breeding programmes run on seasons, not on legal calendars, and a variety that finishes a successful trial is under immediate commercial pressure to be sold. A short capture session that produces a reviewable draft is what allows a filing to be on record before the first seed lot ships, rather than after the window has closed.

PatentPC's culture is built on continuous improvement, which has produced automation efficiency at a level previously not thought possible — and those savings are passed through to clients. For a fund managing a portfolio of operating companies, that efficiency is what makes it economic to run a consistent IP discipline across every holding rather than only across the largest one.

- Audit the library first — a review of the germplasm collection and release history to establish, for each line of commercial interest, whether a statutory bar has already run and which regime remains available.
- Match the right instrument to the right variety — Plant Variety Protection certificates for seed-propagated lines, plant patents for asexually propagated selections, and utility patents where a trait, cannabinoid profile, or method justifies the broader claim.
- File before the seed ships — applications on record ahead of certification filings, variety review board publication, trial disclosures, and first commercial sale, all of which start clocks running.
- Protect the process, not only the plant — tissue-culture and tissue-ponic propagation, disease-free multiplication, extraction and refinement, and chain-of-custody and dual-COA systems claimed as methods a competitor cannot simply observe and repeat.
- Trade secret where filing would only teach — parent lines, selection criteria, and cross histories held as documented trade secrets under proper agreements, because a published pedigree is a roadmap for a competitor.

- Brands and licensing together — trademark protection for the variety and retail names, structured so licences can be written and enforced across state lines without colliding with federal lawful-use limits.

RESULTS

The practical effect of a deliberate filing programme is that the library stops leaking. Lines with commercial potential are assessed against the statutory windows before they are trialled publicly or sold, so the choice between a Plant Variety Protection certificate, a plant patent, a utility filing, or a documented trade secret is made while all four are still available. Certification and organic filings proceed knowing what they do and do not protect. Licensing conversations start from a registered right rather than from a claim of ownership. And across the fund's operating companies, the same discipline is applied at a cost that a single portfolio holding could not have justified on its own.

By working with experienced attorneys backed by a technology stack, it avoided paying outside counsel to learn plant variety protection practice and cannabinoid chemistry, and received applications with more technical depth on a far shorter cycle. Further, by making the change, Viride now pays less while receiving more accurate and more efficient patent services — with claim drafting and strategic advice still owned by its patent attorneys.

“PatentPC has proven to us that it is indeed possible to receive a higher level of service at a lower cost. They are not just a law firm, they are our trusted guides in getting patents from the USPTO.”

IAN DIXON, CO-FOUNDER & CEO, VIRIDE RESEARCH FUND

Certification proves what it is. Protection decides who owns it.

PatentPC pairs experienced patent attorneys with inventors across plant variety protection, plant and utility patents, process filings, and trademarks — so a breeding programme is protected before the first seed lot ships. Talk to us about a germplasm audit and a filing strategy for your portfolio.

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