

# ***The Man Who Planted Trees: Lost Groves, Champion Trees, and an Urgent Plan to Save the Planet***

**Jim Robbins**

**Spiegel and Grau, 2012**

**Reviewed by Leland Beaumont**

This book is a rare and wonderful mix of warm-hearted storytelling, hard-headed science reporting, and a smattering of mysticism integrated into an inspiring true story of how one man's actions are now working to restore and reinvigorate the forests and help heal the planet.

The most grand and spectacular instances of each tree species are known as *champion trees*. Enthusiasts seek out these magnificent trees and nominate them for champion status. However, not until nurseryman Dave Milarch's Near Death Experience were serious efforts made to clone these trees, archive their DNA, and distribute young trees—genetically identical to their champion parents—where they can continue to live and propagate.

Sadly some 95 percent of America's ancient redwood forests have been logged. What remains are fragmented, making them less resilient. Much of our nation's old growth forests are gone, or nearly gone. What remain are often runts, French poodles (Dave's term for trees that are showy for a few years but not built to last), or exotic species. This reduces resiliency and greatly impacts biodiversity.

Fortunately due Dave's determined actions, cuttings from trees thousands of years old, from basal sprouts on the largest known tree stumps, and from many famously or secretly grand trees have been collected, sprouted, and are now growing in the Archangel Ancient Tree Archive. Work is underway to create "the global collection" of clones from a hundred of the biggest and oldest trees on earth. These sprouts are becoming available for reforestation and afforestation projects.

Trees cool urban heat islands, clean and manage water and air, act as natural mood elevators, reduce anxiety and depression, improve property value, mitigate noise, provide wildlife habitat, recreation, food and medicines. Reforestation with genetically proven stock provides an excellent opportunity to begin reversing ecological damage done over the past several centuries. The determined man who planted trees is making this possible.

**Life of Trees**

In this rare and wonderful mix of warm-hearted storytelling, hard-headed science reporting, and a smattering of mysticism is the true story of how one man's determined actions are helping to reinvigorate the world's forests.