

Growing Your Own

Contents

- Obtaining Seeds** **4**
- Sprouting Seeds** **5**
- Outdoor Growing** **6**
 - Backyard Outdoors 6
 - Guerrilla Farming 6
 - Transplanting Outdoors 8
 - Bugs and other Pests 8
- Indoor Gardening** **9**
 - Special Concerns With Indoor Growing 9
 - Starting Out 9
 - Grow Lights 9
 - Light Timer 10
 - Micro-growing 11
- Stages of Growth and Sexing** **12**
- A note on "worthless" males** **13**
- Pinching** **14**
- Harvest** **15**
- Trimming** **16**
- Drying** **17**
- Manicuring** **18**
- Curing** **19**
- Storage** **20**

All three varieties (*Sativa*, *Indica*, and *Ruderalis-hybrids*) of pot are weeds! As such, can grow in all climates under every kind of soil condition arctic or desert environments. Acres and acres of the low THC commercial hemp strain of the plant grew wild in Kansas, Iowa and New Jersey in the 60's - with some patches still around today. Even if you are not located next door to a large pot field growing in the wild, maybe you can have some success in growing your own. Some may make fun of a sixty year old hippie and his seeded homegrown shwag, but he never has to look for pot dealers and smokes even when everyone else is scraping their pipe for residue because all the dealers have run out.

There are two basic camps as far as pot growing. One is outdoor growing and the other is growing indoors with the aid of grow lights. Each has it's own advantages and disadvantages. We will cover each.

LEGAL NOTE Growing pot is a FELONY in many places, depending on amount. A few of the more liberal states in the Empire may allow you to grow a small number of plants only for personal or medical use or have decriminalized small amounts where all you pay is a steep fine. Most other states will nail you for up to 30 years in prison for only a few plants while child molesters and rapists get out in 5 years! Prison time can be worse if you even have sandwich bags in your house as they can accuse you of trying to distribute even if you have absolutely no intention to. The pigs can confiscate your vehicle or home to sell at "drug lord auctions" so they can buy new cop toys! Social workers can take away kids and put them in foster homes. In some countries outside Amerika, it is worse with possible life in prison and even death sentences!! Know the laws, keep Security Culture, be safe, and keep your mouth shut!

Obtaining Seeds

The first thing is to start with a bunch of good-quality seeds. You can get this from from grass gained from a recent purchase or collected from parties or friends. You may even know someone who grows who is willing to donate some of his or her killer seed stock if you are really fortunate.

While sometimes it can be hard to find seeds if you are currently in a circle of non-smokers or in a drought, do not waste time and money with any of these "seed bank" companies advertised on 420 friendly sites and magazines. That is - unless you happen to live in Canada or Holland and can purchase the seeds in person. Even those magazines and sites know most of these are scams, but tolerate them due to the fact they need ad revenue to stay afloat. These online places have been known to be undercover pig places collecting names and addresses. Even with the legit ones, you could end up paying a non-refundable 20-40 USD for a ripped up packet and a nasty letter from US Customs or they could just simply take the money with no recourse for a refund.

Since it is generally frowned upon by pot consumers to have a bag laden with seeds, most pot growers try to pull males before the females can go to seed (sexing is covered later). As such, if you get your seeds from purchased weed, you are probably going to find a lot of immature seeds or infertile seeds - if any. Fear not, though. Many bags do have usable seeds. Select only the darkest and hardest seeds and discard any white or hollow ones. A great way to see if the seed is fertile is to squeeze it between your thumb and finger, if it does not break it should be good.

The disadvantage to just getting from a random bag is unless you have a trained eye or know much about the weed's origin, it can be hard to know if the strain is a good grow for your climate or will tolerate being grown indoors well. *C. Sativa* tends to get 10 to 12 feet tall and grows really good in climates with long growing seasons while *C. Indica* is a bit shorter and is suited for areas with shorter summers. But - this, too can be dealt with.

Sprouting Seeds

Regardless of whether you decide to plant indoors or outdoors, the generally accepted way of getting seeds to sprout is the wet paper towel method. The broadcast method of farming other crops use of just planting tons of seeds and waiting for something to pop up is way too wasteful and unreliable.

- Place your seeds in a plate on top of a paper towel then place another paper towel on top of it. Then, wet the paper towels on the plate with the covered seeds with water. Do not let the water dry out or you will have to start over, possibly killing the seeds. Put the towel into a ziplock bag and place this in a warm light place for about a week or until a sprout about a half inch long appears from most of the seeds.
- When the seedlings have sprouts it is time to put them in a seedling planter. The small, disposable six pack planters and potting soil that garden shops use are perfect and will give you an easier time transplanting later. Of course, if you have more plants use more planters.
- Poke holes in the soil deep enough so that the whole sprout is just covered put them in the soil root down (the white thing). Always water after planting or transplanting any plant. Do not fertilize at this point. The plants are too young and the fertilizer can burn them. The soil already has enough to last the plant quite some time.
- The seedlings should remain in their boxes in a sunny window or under a light for about a month or two. They should receive enough water during this period to keep the soil moist (about every two days). It really helps the plant's survival if they are about six to eight inches tall before transplanting in a larger pot or prepared to be transported to a guerrilla grow site.

Outdoor Growing

Arguably, the great outdoors produces the best product with the least amount of experience necessary. But, it can be a bit riskier. Every pot head dreams of stumbling upon a pot patch in the wilderness to pillage. Lazy thieves and even false friends will be more than willing to relieve you of an unattended stash if months of free smoking or rent level money is involved. Likewise, pigs patrol the skies with high tech toys looking for a patch to swoop in and destroy. Even nature itself can take your harvest as all manner of bugs and wildlife can eat your plants and bad storms can snap the stalks!

Before planting outdoors, you need to pick a spot.

No matter where outdoors you plant, use common sense! Keep your plants out of view, away from high pedestrian traffic, and camouflaged. This includes planting around other tall plants, behind areas, and other creative stealth tactics.

Backyard Outdoors

Some folks grow from pots or in a garden in their own backyard. After all, it is very convenient to have the plant right outside to monitor and not have to worry with the hassle and expense of elaborate indoor grow lights or being forced to hike in the bug infested woods in a hot summer to make sure the babies are doing okay.

If you think your backyard is secure, go for it! BUT, be VERY careful to keep this hidden. Crime Stopper Hotlines in anti-420 states pay out up to 500 USD with no court appearance needed for any word of any pot patch and a conviction. Grow busts are prestigious to the cops that bust them and are highly sought after by the average cop. Sometimes a hotline tip is all that is needed for a search warrant in “throw ‘em in jail/ tough on drugs” cultured parts of the Empire. Nosy neighbors, landlords, and even power meter readers can all profit from this. (indeed, there was a story published somewhere of a power meter reader who made an extra paycheck like this as he went legally going around snooping while making his rounds) If the plant is growing in your own backyard or balcony, there is no denying the plant is yours in the eyes of a judge.

Guerrilla Farming

A great idea, though quite a bit more logistics and work, is to find some hidden little-used area a bit away from where you live and plant in it. Scouting out a good location is an art and can give you a great excuse to hike/bike and experience the outdoors. An advantage to this is it can be hard to catch who did it (barring open mouths, bad luck, or stupidity) if the “eye in the sky” finds it and leads teams of pigs armed with machetes to destroy it. But, remember - the object of the game is that we do not want anyone or anything to steal the crops!

- Wear bug repellent and long, sturdy pants in thick wooded areas spring to late summer. No shorts even though it may be blazing hot and humid. You will be sorry otherwise.

- Be mindful of who (if anyone) sees you go into the hidden area and never leave trails. Going at different times and different days along with going out there sparingly can reduce chances of unwanted attention.
- Just say NO to flying pigs! While you do need a lot of sunlight, pot is not an extreme sun plant like corn or sugar cane and can cope with some shade. You can make by on half a day's worth of direct sunlight and *partial* (not complete) shade. The DEA and state agencies use military aircraft and satellites tuned to the infrared reflection of marijuana plants. Computers help analyze satellite photos to direct helicopter squads to the grow site. Any plant or group of plants with wide-open view from the air is in danger from these high tech thieves! Growing few plants scattered and spread in thick areas crowded with other tall-growing plants and with partial shade is the way to go. Flying pigs are in full swing from late July to late October when most variety of plants are budding and about to harvest and are big and easier to see from the air with their toys. Also, big ready to harvest plants by weight look good to the media and the record for "taking X dollars of weed off the streets" to justify continued enforcement and tax dollars to fund entire departments. Be vigilant against this treachery during those months just when your hard work is about to come to fruition.
- Leave cell phones at home or take out the battery. Like we discuss in Free Telephones, almost all modern phones send out signals to multiple towers and can be used to triangulate that you were at a place regardless of being equipped with GPS, being turned on, or not. This usually is not a big deal unless they have already busted you and the prosecutors still need some way to place you at the grow site. But a little caution never hurt anyone.
- The best places by far to plant are areas that no sane person would want to go up into. We are talking about impenetrable thorn brushes from hell and tall snake and mosquito infested areas. This will keep opportunistic folks, land surveyors, or hunters from running up on plants. Even folks who may know approximately where the plants are will be given pause when faced with a wall of briars!
- Try not to go too big! Most of the big pot field busts are from those that tried to go crazy and put out dozens and dozens of plants in the same spot for months of smoke and the big money. Instead, place two to three plants in separate locations located far from each other.
- When transporting young plants fresh from the seedling and nursery process, grab a bunch of liter coke bottles and cut out the bottom. You can then place this over the little pots your young plants are in to keep them from damage during transport.
- You may want to make sure a water source like a creek or slough is nearby as Cannabis tends to love water. If a dry growing season occurs, carting two liter bottles of water throughout a months long season to your spot can get tedious (and risky).
- It can be good idea to carry a fishing pole or hiking gear with you or even walk a dog to give you a veil of an excuse for being out there.
- Be extremely careful during the time you place the young plants out AND during harvest as these are the most dangerous times. You can always claim you were out hiking or hunting for future fishing spots in the rare event you are harassed departing a stretch of woods, but there is little you can do if you are searched and found carting young plants or backpacks full of pounds of herb! It is probably also a good idea to leave farm implements like digging tools, buckets, etc. out there hidden under heavy brush and not carry with you.

Transplanting Outdoors

Prepare the land the way you would for any garden vegetable. Dig up the ground with a pitchfork or heavy duty rake, removing rocks. Rake the plot level and dig holes in the soil a little deeper than the soil height of your plants. Three feet apart is okay, but six feet apart is better for plant hole placement. Use judgment as to the placement of holes as far as to keep with good camouflage. Remove the young plants from the other pot, being careful not to damage the roots and keeping as much soil intact as possible. Transplant each plant into one of the holes and fill the hole with dirt. When all the plants are in the ground, water the entire area. Tend them the way you would any other garden. They should reach a height of about five feet to twelve feet (depending on genetics and climate) by the end of the summer and be ready to harvest.

Remember camouflage! Replace natural plants, fauna, and leaves back around and do not disturb large areas around the hole you dug for the plant. Always grow with limited views to the open sky and around other tall plants. The best guerrilla grows can not be spotted even with a trained eye five feet away. One to three plants per spot spreads your losses if one spot is actually found and makes it harder to detect.

Bugs and other Pests

If you have bugs chewing on your plants, go to your local health food store and buy a small bottle of Dr. Bronner's Liquid Baby-Mild Soap (the unscented kind). Dilute it about 1 part soap to 2 parts water, pour it into a spray bottle, then spray the plants with it. Dr. Bronner's is a very mild, vegetable-oil based soap and will not harm the plants. However, it will taste very bad to the bugs and hopefully they will go elsewhere.

If you are doing an outdoor grow and are looking for a more natural solution, you can buy Praying Mantis Castings (they'll eat any bug smaller than them) from your local nursery.

Outdoor growers in stealth locations also may have trouble with wildlife like deer and rabbits nibbling on the herbs. Cannabis has a very unique smell which is attractive for a snack - and do you blame them? A good way to keep these freeloaders at bay is to put out mothballs. Wildlife tends to avoid areas with human smells. We have also heard of putting out old socks and panty hose, but tend to discourage that due to the remote extreme paranoid chance of DNA testing if the helicopter bacon patrol swoops in on your spot looking for bust evidence.

Indoor Gardening

If you don't have access to a backyard, field, or woody area, you can grow good stuff right in your own closet, garage, shed, or extra room using artificial lighting. For some living in large, high density population urban areas with no backyard or empty wooded areas for many miles, this may be the only halfway realistic choice. Indoor growing requires a bit more research and money investment to do right, but you will not be at the mercy of what season it is or be worried for months about plants way out in the middle of nowhere being ripped off.

Special Concerns With Indoor Growing

You will need to be fairly stable and not worried with possible eviction, job transfer, or having to leave a volatile situation. If you think you are going to need to move within the time it takes to grow (six to nine months - four months for certain indoor friendly strains), you may want to do outdoors, or just continue to buy and let someone else grow. Most good strains of pot have a strong, unmistakable smell towards the later stages of growth that can sometimes really stink a place up and give your secret away. You **MUST** be able to limit non-sympathetic visitors to your space. It probably is not a good idea to try this if you are in a college dorm, rooming house, or still living with parents. If you rent, you need to look out for landlords. Some landlords are distant and rarely seen while others are very nosy and hands-on. Only you know your landlord and can make this call. Just remember that the landlord and any staff or any approved contractor **CAN** legally enter and inspect your pad for needed repairs or for damages with little or no notice - even when you are not at home! All it takes is for someone to bust a water pipe living above you or something along those lines. Changing locks or having someone always home if you can get away with it can give you minor relief. But, they can still get in legally if they really want to or need to - even if they need to bust your lock.

Starting Out

You start out from seed with the wet paper towel method and seedling planters same as you would for outdoor growing. Transplant the plants into larger wooden boxes or flower boxes. Be sure and cover the bottom of each box with a few inches of pebbles or broken pottery before you add the soil. This will ensure proper drainage. Fertilize the soil according to the instructions on the box and punch out holes in much the same way you would do if you were growing outside. After the young plants have been transplanted and watered thoroughly, you will have to rig up a lighting system.

Grow Lights

There are several types of lighting systems one can use.

The cheapest and easiest is to use fluorescent bulbs. Indeed, this is the old standby for many novice indoor growers. They run cooler and more efficiently than most types of lights. You need a lot of light

to grow good grass. Try to use about 8000 lumens per square foot of growing space. (You can find the lumen output of a light bulb by looking on the box.)

If you can afford it, HID systems are well worth the money, and will drastically increase the size and potency of your final product. These use much less energy per lumen and output incredible amounts of light. The most efficient type of HID is a High Pressure Sodium setup. You can buy an HPS setup a hardware and home improvement shop for about 70 to 85 USD.

It is also possible to build a large bank of red and blue LED's (remember, you still need the full brightness). It's common practice to have more red than blue LED's, but this is just because they tend to be cheaper/more common. This approach can also be used for indoor gardening of other plants. LED's are not full spectrum which may theoretically stunt growth, but they're 2-3 times more efficient than fluorescent bulbs, give off less heat. UV LED's are also available if you find that you need UV for your plants to grow as well.

Regardless of which lights you decide on, you will still need to set up rigs and modify it to suit your purposes. Just be careful when playing with wiring and electricity. Some kind of way to change the position and height of the lights will be needed as the plants get taller. If you choose to use fluorescent bulbs, keep the bulb about 2 inches away from the top of the plant. If you go the HID route, you'll need to keep the bulbs about 2 feet away from the plants. As the plant grows you will need to move the lights higher. Be sure to consider this factor when you are setting up your system.

A quick note about specialty Grow Shops and your favorite three letter agency

A few years back, there was a DEA spy operation called "Operation Green Merchant". Pigs would have either trained undercover cops with lots of indoor growing knowledge posing as salesmen and/or parked in an undercover van across from these stores watching folks leaving with purchases. They would then put under surveillance and bust folks 3 or 4 months later at harvest time. Search warrants were then easily obtained from certain sympathetic judges with the blessing of local politicians to justify increased budgets and federal money. Yes, this may be old news. Most of the better remaining grow shops nowadays have now established in store policies where even talking about pot will get you kicked out of the store to save what business they had left after the fiasco. But still, we recommend not buying all your stuff in one place. Do not ask in public about growing anything indoors, especially when it is a fact that it is not cost effective to grow anything indoors except pot for the average person with cheap produce prices. Run from any salesman or staff that implies anything about pot growing activities or even seems sympathetic. Do all research online or from quality pot magazines sold in bookstores. Or better, only buy from a home improvement shop that deals in more than just indoor growing garden equipment and buy from more than one location. As always, use cash and no plastic cards. There are always new scams hatching to put innocent citizens behind bars as long as money is to be made.

Light Timer

Unless you have one of the *C. Ruderalis*/*C. Indica* cross auto-flowering strains, you are going to have to invest in a timer to control light cycles as most strains of pot go into budding stages based on shortening light cycles. Advanced set ups sometimes use two grow rooms - one for a nursery with long light cycles and a budding room with much shorter cycles. Be aware extremely large set ups use lots of power and generate heat that can be viewed by flying pigs using military toys. They then have been known to get power bills and then put your house under surveillance to attempt to get enough dirt to convince a judge for a warrant to bust into your place! Just like outdoor growing, if you keep it on a fairly small scale, you should be able to be safe and your power bill will not jump way up.

Micro-growing

If space is at a premium, there has been an emerging fad amongst the 420 growing hobbyists because of increased aerial surveillance and power company spying : The Micro stealth grow. There are some advertised products in High Times and 420 forum sites that offer already constructed solutions or you can build something cool yourself. Regardless if you build yourself or order something ready to go, be aware that micro-grow is not a newbie friendly deal at all. Yields tend to be not very large because the lighting tends to be way underpowered or non-indoor friendly strains of seeds are used. To get it to work, you really have to pay attention and do a bit more research than is in the scope of this article. Optimistic yield can be about a half ounce every 60-90 days if you know what the hell you are doing. In practice most folks will be lucky to get one bud, if anything, at first.

The Aerogarden, Growtron, and other products are small, self contained, hydroponic grow systems. Often, you can find them advertised in High Times and on online sites. They cost 150 USD to 400 USD and can supposedly grow marijuana, tomatoes, and other plants. The companies that make these contraptions are NOT going give technical support with pot for legal reasons, so you are on your own if your harvest turns out to be a dud. Expect them to try to sell you on special, proprietary nutrients that "must be used" to get anything to grow. Most commercial grow machines also use their own special light bulbs that can only be replaced at hiked up price directly from the company if one blows out. Almost all these companies have strict or nonexistent return or refund policies. 420 friendly forums MAY be able to offer advice to help get this to work in a jam. But, expect snickers about you getting screwed by the veterans (especially with one post history) or be asked to do stupid stuff like post pictures of your failed plants online to 'diagnose them' by secret cop members of the forums and/or longtime posters who may genuinely want to help.

More rewarding and a bit cheaper is to convert common household items into micro grow boxes or build a specific set up! The tales of high school students hiding a plant from parents in speaker boxes do have some truth in them. We have seen examples of old computer cases, computer desks, fish aquariums, cupboards, shipping boxes, aluminum garbage cans and even a gutted dishwasher being used. Be sure to keep it watered and use a fluorescent tube or two connected by a power cord that appears to fit the object. Foil on the inside walls will reflect the light and save you energy. Most good set-ups are also going to need a fan to keep the plants from getting burnt. An old computer fan or two is best for this. As the plant matures the resin smell can get strong and will probably give you away. If you are a teenager hiding plants from parents or from resident advisers in a college dorm, keep this in mind before opening yourself up to being thrown in rehab by concerned parents or kicked out of school. Just like the commercial devices we talked about earlier, do not expect to hit weed Valhalla on the first tries. Growing in small, enclosed areas with limited light is an art and a science.

Stages of Growth and Sexing

There are 2 stages of plant growth, and each stage needs a different lighting schedule. The first stage is called the Vegetative stage. This is when the plant is focusing on growing its roots, stem, and leaves. During the vegetative stage, your plants will need 18 hours of light and 6 hours of darkness per day. The big box stores and home improvement depots sell 'vacation' light timers right next to the light bulbs. These timers are just the trick. The vegetative stage lasts for about five months in a plant from seed, depending on your plant. To tell when the plant is moving into the second stage, check the nodes where the leaves grow out of the stem. If your leaves are coming out of the stem directly opposite each other (in a Y shape), your plant is still maturing. Once the nodes start to alternate, change your light schedule to 12 hours of light and 12 hours of dark. This will force the plant to move into the second stage, Flowering.

If you are growing outside during the proper season, mother nature takes care of this for you. If you are growing indoors, you need the light timers. Some specially bred hybrids flower regardless of cycle, but most strains still key off how much daylight is around.

Flowering stage is when the magic starts to happen. Like the watermelon crop, marijuana is a sexed plant species with both male and female sexes. When the plants are young it can be hard even for an experienced eye to tell the difference. But, as the plants mature the difference is unmistakable. Your female plants will start to produce the beautiful sticky buds we know and love. The female plants have a larger and heavier flower structure while the males are somewhat skimpy. The female plant produces the stronger grass and the choicest parts are the top leaves (including the flowers). If your plant grows any round ball shaped things anywhere it is a male. Those balls open and release pollen. Females grow hairs then buds instead.

Occasionally, the plant can be both sexes! This is called hermaphrodite. It is caused by genetics and stress from causing from changing the light cycle too soon.

As we mentioned under seeds, heavy seeded weed is frowned upon in pot smoker circles. Most folks pull the male plants at the first sign of sex to prevent the females from producing seed for a stronger high and a more marketable product. Others could care less and let it go to seed so they can have seed for the next year without going through a lot of trouble. Perhaps they take only the seed from the best plant to influence the genetics next season and start reading High Times and forums to become elite growers. We leave this decision to you and what agenda you may have. Seeds kept in this manner are good for about a year.

A note on "worthless" males

Most folks will tell you the males are worthless. Indeed, they are less intense than good females. However, males still do contain THC. Good males can have as much THC as very weak females depending on genetics. So, even if you are pulling the males to get unseeded herb, you still can get some low grade weed to last you till harvest. Try it out, you may be surprised. If you are in a bad area with no dealers and only your harvest to wait on, this can be better than nothing.

Pinching

Pinching is a simple process that involves pinching off terminal bud (where the youngest leaves are forming) to encourage the lateral buds to grow (you get two top buds instead of one). When these form you can pinch them again splitting them into four and so on. This will make your plant thicker as opposed to tall and will increase your harvest. You can start pinching when your plant is on its third or fourth set of leaves, however pinching your plant too often can stunt its growth. Use common sense, pinch, let it grow out a bit then pinch again.

Harvest

Awesome! Your plants have survived bugs, potential thieves, rat outs and sky patrols, malnutrition, dehydration, and all manner of nasty things that could have robbed you of smoke. Now it is time to collect. We bet you will never again gripe about the price of weed. That was a lot of work!

Inside or outside, the plants will be best if allowed to reach maturity. When you want to harvest the crop, you can either wet the soil and pull it out, or just cut it. It is up to you.

Indoor growers and backyard growers have it made if they are this far along in the process since a safe haven is right nearby.

Guerrilla outdoor farmers can have it quite a bit rougher. They may need a car or multiple trips by bike or foot which can be a vulnerable time because laws about police searches in a car (see Legal Advice under Hip Pocket Law about advice when stopped in a vehicle and on cops in general) and almost no recourse exists concerning searches while on foot. Chop it up into transportable sections. Be sure to bring something inconspicuous to transport it in. Be quick and get it and yourself the hell out of there as soon as possible to a safe location, but NOT like you are intentionally hiding something. Drive/ bike ride/ walk casual. This is the most dangerous time with cops in full swing in the air and a possible felony level amount of pot (in many areas) right out in the open with you right there or on your person. Be sober and of a clear head and wait to imbibe when harvest is over. You need your wits. We are not trying to make you too paranoid and most likely you will be okay. Remember, most busts still remain in the realm of open mouths, bragging, or a “friend” in trouble cutting a deal by ratting in attempt to remain free. We just want to remind you what you are traveling with.

Trimming

This is a labor intensive process and you may want to set aside a whole day depending on how much herb you managed to harvest.

You are going to need some room to move around, too. Full grown pot plants are kind of bushy and the larger varieties can be as large as small trees!

Hang the plant upside down by a string over a plastic garbage bag (to collect the leaves) and start trimming off all the big and medium sized shade leaves. Use a small set of scissors, careful not to cut your buds!

After the big leaves are gone, put down a new bag and cut the smaller leaves. This is called the shake. Save this! Shake is great to cook with and does contain some THC. You could smoke it when you have nothing else, but the leaves tend to have more of the cannabanoids that cause drowsiness and less THC. It can be made into cannibutter or hash! You can also combine the shake with the alcohol making skills you learned in Strange Brewing to make some killer pot liquor if you want to get really creative.

Try not to man handle your buds or the THC will stick to your fingers and they will not be as strong.

Drying

Now you are ready to dry them. Just hang them upside down in a dark dry 60-75 degree room until the outside of the buds are dry and crispy (2-3 weeks depending on your area). This takes a while but patience pays off with a less harsh and cleaner smoke.

Not doing this causes what the old timer hippies used to call “the green dope hacking cough” if it is smoked. Yes, it will still get you very high. But the smoke is ungodly harsh and unpleasant and makes you cough up phlegm.

It is possible to use a microwave for three minutes or so to dry if impatient and are itching to try some after all that hard work , but it dries it poorly and nothing beats naturally dried bud.

Manicuring

Now that your weed is dry, it is time to cut the buds off the stem and make them pretty and easier to store. This may take some time. (estimate a day or two per mature big tree-like plants like sativas, maybe the better part of the day for bushy indicas, and an hour or three for short ruderalis-indica hybrids or indoor grown midgets). To start, simply cut the plant into more manageable sections. Then, carefully cut the buds off the stems over a large tray. Now you are ready to Manicure your buds.

Manicuring is the process of cutting off the little leaves sticking out of your buds to create a better product (the smoke from the leaves is harsher than the smoke from the buds). Cuticle scissors sold in the make-up and cosmetic sections of many stores are beautiful for this task. Trim off the leaves as if you were giving the buds a hair cut, then place them in a large bowl so they don't get mixed up with untrimmed ones.

Save everything you cut off except the worthless stems and stalks! Yes, you get more shake! This scrap contains a lot of THC. Throwing it away is a huge waste. You may notice while you're manicuring that your buds aren't totally dry, this is normal. When you're done put them in a brown paper bag in a cool dry place for about a week. Open the bag once a day to shift the buds around, let them air out for about 20 minutes, then close the bag.

You will also get a special gift while manicuring. The seed husks (not the seeds themselves, but the tiny husk around which the seed grows out of) is called "grower's privilege" by old timers. This and the sticky globules on the hairs of the buds contain the most THC of any part of the plant with the cleanest smoke and the highest high. Most end-user buyers never get to experience smoking nothing but the globules and the seed husks in a smoke bowl since after time, the globules dry out and what husks are there get pressed in with the rest of the bud. Have fun.

Curing

It is not really a requirement, but this really improves the flavor of your buds. You may have been fortunate and have more than you can smoke for quite a bit, so why not have the stuff cure while waiting to be partaken of?

True pot connoisseurs cure their buds, much like tobacco growers cure fine tobaccos or wine makers let their wines age. Fortunately, unlike tobacco which the tobacco companies let cure for up to a year, pot only takes a few weeks at most. Curing makes your bud taste better and helps draw even more moisture out of your buds so they are less likely to mold in storage.

To cure your bud put it in a glass jar and "burp" the jar twice a day for 5 weeks (open it for 20 minutes and stir your buds around).

An alternative method is to only keep them in the jars for 2-3 weeks, then put them in zip-lock bags in the freezer.

Make sure to suck all the air out of the bags (use your mouth). Then put the smaller bags into a large freezer bag and suck the air out (keeps them from getting frost burn). After a week in the freezer, dump the buds into a bowl and let them dry for 24 hours. Then, put them back in the bags and into the freezer for long term storage. The flavor matures over time even in the freezer.

Be careful if you have guests over to your pad that may open your freezer and see a large stockpile of ganja! Most kitchens are considered acceptable guest traveled areas of any house.

Storage

Make sure to store your buds in glass jars or double bagged in the freezer. Fungus and mold can be a real problem with long term storage, so make sure everything is air tight and no moisture can get in.

Keep the buds in a dark place. THC is known to deteriorate in direct sunlight in already harvested plants.

Large stockpiles of pot are an attractive target for thieves. While somewhat rare, the known location of such a stockpile can also be a tempting thing to rat about if some careless person who knows you (and does not read STW articles and know better!) has a habit of serious run-ins with cops and listens to their lies of decreased or no jail time for giving up information. Almost all busts are not the result of good detective work but of some mouth blabbing. Remember Security Culture as this is not a game.

We recommend common sense and the practice of double stashing. If you are the type that always has a lot of guests come over and you want to be a good host/hostess and smoke them out, only bring out up to an ounce (preferably less) and NEVER mention you have more. Some growers go a bit further as to keep the main stockpile away from their house using creative techniques in hidden places. We leave this decision up to you, the quality of your inner circle, and your own level of paranoia.

Happy smoking!

See also Farm It for greenhouse ideas and other general farming ideas.



Growing Your Own

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