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The HARVEST JOURNALS

How growers in a Northern California town harvest their weed

By Jenny Bloom of ilovegrowingmarijuana.com

HARVEST JOURNALS

Congratulations! You've just downloaded the Harvest Journals ebook. The process of harvesting is when marijuana growers cut the flowers of a mature plant and dry them.

For this Harvesting Journals I visited a Northern California town that is famous for growing marijuana due to its remote locations and sunny California climate. This Harvest Journals will teach you everything you need to know about how growers in one Northern California town harvest their weed. I met with 4 marijuana growers and asked them about their harvest.

Every aspect of the harvesting process is explained here, from picking out your seeds to choosing your nutrients. Carefully read this guide to harvest like a professional!

I wrote this journal after receiving many questions and requests from visitors of ilovegrowingmarijuana.com. Many people requested a Harvest journal as a PDF to read on-the-go or to print out. I want to help people grow, and I hope you'll share your knowledge as well. Feel free to share this ebook with fellow growers.

To learn more about harvesting and the life cycle of the marijuana plant, please visit www.ilovegrowingmarijuana.com.

For regular updates and the latest growing techniques be sure to check out my accounts on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.

Happy growing,

Robert Bergman



ROWING

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IT'S ALL ABOUT THE HARVEST

When you grow marijuana, everything you do, from picking out your seeds to choosing your nutrients comes down to the harvest. You aren't just growing a plant, you're growing a medicine, a commodity, or a statement. For thousands of years, the cannabis plant has provided nutrients, relief, and tools for mankind. Nowadays, we are primarily concerned with one specific part of this plant – the flower.

Marijuana is made from the dried flowers of the Cannabis sativa or Cannabis indica plant.

Follow this link to learn more about Sativa and Indica!

Flowers contain large amounts of phytocannabinoids, which are plant cannabinoids. Cannabinoids cause psychological and physiological effects on the human body; we produce them as endocannabinoids. Of course, marijuana isn't the only plant that produces cannabinoids, but it is the most popular (and likely, effective). Once the dried plant is heated, the phytocannabinoids chemically change into a form that is consumable by our bodies.

The process of harvesting is when marijuana growers cut the flowers of a mature plant and dry them. This process can range from simple to complex: low-footprint to high-tech; top-shelf to straight schwag.





A TOWN BUILT ON GROWING

Growing marijuana for profit can be very lucrative. For this story, I visited a Northern California town that is famous for growing marijuana. Do you want to learn more about growing in Northern California?

Check the Grow Calendar here!

Here the effects of the weed business were obvious. It was common to see dirt covered growers emerge from brand new pick-up trucks. In the bars, you'd find men in their 60s discussing their latest trip to Costa Rica while sipping on a Budweiser. Turn around, and you'll see women in heavy makeup and miniskirts flirting with younger growers playing pool. It was the old wild west; saloons filled with drunks dreaming about the gold they were sure to soon find.

Except this gold was green, and you plant it, not dig for it.

Growing marijuana was so easy in this small town, due to its remote location, numerous spots for guerilla growing and sunny California climate.

Read more about growing in extreme climates here!

It was no surprise that the town quickly flooded with ganjapreneurs. As the loggers ran out of work and left town, new growers took over what remained. What developed was an entire economy built out of the marijuana industry, which emphasis on the growers.





A FALLING DEMAND

Many people are happy about the legalization of marijuana in California, but not these folks. For the most part, everything about it, from the legalization of home grows, to the licensing requirements for producers, was not in their interest. As the state government relaxed their raids on grows, it became less necessary to hide them. Suddenly, a town that became famous for its ability to guerrilla grow was no longer needed.

At the same time, indoor growing technology continued to improve, and even in a state known for its ability to produce superior agriculture, consumers preferred marijuana that was lab-grown. Perhaps it has something to do with its proximity to Silicon Valley.

California is no stranger to tech, weed tech included, and the art of growing is slowly being lost to science. Although many LA and Bay Area buyers no longer want 'outdoor grown weed,' some still pay homage to one of the original meccas of weed. It's hard to forget that this town helped supply 1960s California with the marijuana that changed a generation, even if we now know how to grow with LEDs.

Follow this link to learn more about growing with LEDs.





THE INSTABILITY OF GROWING OUTDOORS

When I visited this town, it was mid-October. The Harvest season had begun, and there were rumors that some growers had already sold a few pounds. However, mother nature had not been kind. The California wildfires missed this town, but a nearby town was not as lucky. Although there was no property loss, some growers lost 100s of plants – an entire season's work lost in flames.

Once the fires calmed down, then came the frost. Indian summer hit the mountains, and many growers lost plants that were mere weeks from harvest. Suddenly "Where am I vacationing next?" became "How am I going to pay my trimmers"? The tension was thick, and everyone was eager to get their flowers safely under cover – but they had to finish growing first.

Follow this link for more information about trimming.

How Professional Growers Harvest

In the following pages, we'll talk with various marijuana growers from this Northern California town. They come from all walks of life. There's the Bay area budtender that moved to the mountains to make money growing weed. There's the free-spirited train jumper looking for easy money and a cool place to crash. There's also the hotshot new kid with no backstory and the old' timer Hippie escaping the south in the summer of love.

I met with them all, asked them about their harvest, and some even showed me their grows. They were a welcoming group in a town full of marijuana growers and international hippies looking for work as trimmers. The names have been changed to protect their businesses, but the stories are guite real.





BILL, THE EXPERT GROWER

Bill's never packed marijuana on the backs of mules, but he's been growing marijuana for nearly 18 years and can be considered an expert. His garden is expected to yield over 300 pounds of stinky, sticky marijuana, and he typically harvests 8-10 plants per day. A former budtender, Bill supplements his growing business with a thriving non- marijuana business.

Only the Stinkiest of Strains

"It is getting more competitive nowadays, and it's going to come down to the quality of the product and personal relationships, that's why I only grow strains that are particularly stinky."

Although Bill had been growing for years, the industry in California was rapidly changing, and Bill was fighting to stay competitive. As a successful grower in an area that had been growing marijuana for over 50 years, he like others is in the dangerous spot of being not quite legal. His garden of 88 plants is well – hidden from pedestrians although the aroma of cheese and skunk hits you from nearly a mile away.

Check out our Stinky strains Blue Cheese and Cheese Autoflower.





When Mother Nature Isn't Kind

This year, California experienced some interesting weather. Record heat rocked this mountain town nearly starving many gardens. Bill, however, was prepared. His grow is well equipped with water and plenty of hoses. A few weeks later, growers braced while wildfires tore through the mountainsides. Now, they fear frost.

Follow this link to learn more about how to deal with cold, rainy and humid weather.

"We had to do a hack and hang. It got too cold, and I said take them down earlier than usual."

Normally. Bill would do a process called 'bucking' (or deboning). Staffers would snip the buds and their surrounding leaves with Fiskars scissors, maintaining the branches so that an additional bud could grow in its place – weather permitting of course. They then ran the buds through a machine to separate the leaves and stems, and hand trims the resulting product for an artisan flower.







Hack and Hang, Gang

This year, Bill didn't take any chances, he hacked down nearly a quarter of his garden weeks earlier than usual. Instead of taking buds, they cut off branches at a time. What was left of the plant wasn't very pretty.

"I came out here one morning, and the buds were frozen. Eventually, they thaw and turn to mush. It was scary to look at."

Trying to save whatever buds that they could, he and his crew set up an assembly line to cut down as many salvageable buds possible. Once cut with shears, the branches were hung and dried then bucked by trimmers. The bucked buds are then placed in a trimming machine to remove the smaller leaves and stems.

Machines are our friends

While Bill's grow setup is discrete, it is far from guerilla. In a town that's so grower friendly, this isn't that unusual. Bill is running a business. In addition to his many plants, you'll also find two trimming machines, a kitchen and bathroom for his trimmers, even a separate rack room for curing and a drying room for hanging freshly cut buds.

Although the curing and drying rooms were impressive, the trimming machines were definitely the stars during harvest. Bill's use of machines helped speed up the harvesting process and reduce the amount of people needed to manage the grow.

Normally, Bill used trimming machines, such as TrimPro and Centurian Pro to reduce the amount of time it takes to trim over 300 pounds of marijuana.

"The bud goes through and bounces like it was in a popcorn machine. It then sucks through the bottom and comes out probably 85% trimmed. We then dry it on racks and hand it off to the trimmers to trim around the nubs and shag." Unfortunately, thanks to the frost, this time he is paying trimmers to hand trim nearly 60 pounds of it.





Harvest more than once

In Bill's garden, he attempts to harvest each plant twice. Before marijuana growing was as commercial as it is, it was common for grower to cut down an entire plant during the harvesting process. However, in this town, many growers chose to harvest their buds twice before cutting down the plant.

"We believe that by taking the best buds off first, we give the remaining buds a chance to puff up. We also prevent the larger ones from getting so dense that they attract mold."

By doing this, growers in this town have come up with ways of preventing mold, even when dealing with Mother Nature. They also can increase their overall yield by giving smaller buds a chance to fully bloom and encouraging the growth of new buds by nurturing plants that have been harvested.

Check out our mold resistant strains: Northern Lights, Super Silver Haze and Strawberry Cough.





All about the buds

Cultivating juicy buds is Bill's primary focus, and this starts way before harvest. His staff uses the lollipop method of pruning twice a grow season to help encourage thick, dense top buds. This was very obvious on some of his Blue Cheese plants, where the plant looked more like small trees than an herb.

Follow this link for more information about pruning.

Bill knows his buds are ready when the trichomes are 'nice and milky.' He doesn't trust going by hair color since that can be triggered by temperature rather than plant maturity.

Curing

Once the buds are hung and trimmed, Bill dries them for three more days in a separate rack room. The rack room features a sliding cabinet with rows of drying buds. Each row can hold three pounds of trimmed buds and has a mesh bottom to allow plenty of circulating air.

In addition to the racks, the room also included a dehumidifier, some fans, and a heater. After curing, the buds are trimmed once more and cured further before going to market.

"It's not done once we dry them for three days. After that, we put them in jars to cure for about 7 days. It makes it taste good and burn properly. I strongly discourage anyone trying to speed up the process with excessive heat. Microwave may even rupture the trichomes."

Read everything about harvesting and curing marijuana properly here!





SUE, THE TRIMMER TURNED GROWER

I met Sue in a bar. Like everyone else there, she grew marijuana. Her grow was located outside of town on a mountainside. She seemed too happy to be guerilla growing in the California mountains, but perhaps it was because it was harvest season.

I can grow weed too

Sue showed up in Northern California three years ago looking for work as a trimmer. After a year cutting other people's weed, Sue decided she would try it on her own. Last year, that meant harvesting 88 plants by herself. This year she plans to hire help for her 66 plants, most of which are sativa.



As a guerilla grower, Sue doesn't have a permanent operation. Instead she lives in a camper in her garden. She braves the elements and wildlife all for the safety of her plants. Packing in electricity and water, Sue escapes to town occasionally to socialize, play pool and have a drink. While we drank, I asked her some questions about her grow.



Knowing it's time

I asked Sue if she was excited for harvest, and she couldn't stop grinning. This year she hired experienced trimmers to help her take down her plants. Whereas many new growers worry about knowing when to harvest, Sue didn't seem too concerned.

"I let them go as long as possible, probably too long," she chuckled. "As long as they didn't helicopter at the top, you know, spin out... I was leaving them."

It wasn't that she didn't have tools. She had a jeweler's loupe - a free gift from the local garden supply store -- but she didn't use it. "You can just kinda tell when they are ready."





Seeds vs. Clones

Most of Sue's garden are clones that she received as gifts. Growing clones can be a challenge outdoors, because they often are not as hardy as seed plants. However, Sue prefers clones because they are easier for her to work with as a guerilla grower. Follow this link to learn how to make Marijuana clones.

"The clones grow quicker outdoors, but after a while, they reach a point where the clones stop growing but the seeds keep going. They are better, but they just take longer." This year she is also growing a few seed plants that she started earlier in the year.

Surviving the October Chill

Many growers have started cutting down their plants in preparation for colder than usual temperatures. A sense of panic was hanging over the town, but Sue didn't seem as concerned.

"It's colder where I am, but it's a higher elevation than in town so we don't get that much frost. But it's kinda like a waiting game with the weather all of the time."

She's waiting it out, but she's not foolish. She quickly added that she'd be cutting them all down at the first sign of frost. I reminded her that with that many plants it may take her hours...

"Yeah, it would be an all-nighter....man, I hope I have enough totes."





Speeding up the Harvesting Process

Drying out your harvest can take days, so many growers find ways to make the process go faster. Sue likes to use a table fan to keep air circulating around her plants. It helps her not have to worry about mold developing.

She also uses a space heater and a drying stove. With the drying stove she could dry her plants in three days, whereas some people took 5-7 days to air dry their plants.

Curing

Sue doesn't cure her plants. She explained that there wasn't enough time. "How would I even do that," she laughed. "I'd need a lot of jars."

Although she knew it would significantly improve the taste of her product, in the commercial industry, growing is all about selling. Plus, in a town where everyone is growing, selling is often about harvesting first.

"I guess I could get some of those airtight containers... but that would be a lot of shit to carry."











Sexism and Weed Growing

There aren't many female guerilla growers in Northern California. Many of the females in town work in the shops supporting the growers, grow on their own property or work as trimmers. Sue was an exception, so I asked her if she experienced sexism from the males in the industry.

"You don't talk about it. They say, you're a grower.. how cute!" she explained, but laughed it off, and lowered her voice a bit.

"Last year, I got pneumonia, and ended up in a coma. This year, I'm not letting that happen. I'm getting help and I'm getting it done.

I suggested looking for a job as a legal grower - something way less dangerous. She explained that she lacked the credentials to do so.

"If I could get a job in a dispensary as a grower, I might do that. But I don't look like a grower, so people don't even consider me."

But Sue was far from discouraged. Throwing back some more of her drink she added, "It's whatever. I just do it, and when they say oh shit, I say, yeah, fucking, oh shit!"





JT, THE HOT SNOT NEW KID

No one asked any questions when JT showed up in town three years ago. He was one of many new growers eager to cash in on the green rush. With basic training from a friend, a connection to sell his harvest, and sheer will, JT was poised to make a living off growing some plants.



Loved by many, and good at what he does, JT went from growing completely guerilla to managing discrete backyard grows. A former snowboarder, he spends his free time exploring the California mountains with friends.





It's about loving your plants

"I'm a farmer, not a grower. I raise agricultural crops, I don't grow things in a lab."

Unlike many marijuana growers, JT doesn't think about his grow like a science project. For him, his plants are his 'ladies' - prized possessions that he is responsible for nurturing to maturity. Working alone, every plant gets his undivided attention – it wasn't unusual to find JT spending hours removing old leaves off of plants, or thinking about ways to drive away gophers. His ladies were the only thing he needed in life – that and a good book.

His first year he grew around 70 plants, but this year he increased it to 350 plants that include Bubba's Gift, Great Ape, Bruce Banner, Berry White and Blue Dream.

The A-Team

Although JT prefers to work alone, this year he had too many plants to take down. So, he hired a few trimmers to help.

"It's hard finding good trimmers. Most just want to sit around and smoke weed, or just don't show up at all. I'm very picky about who I let in my gardens, because this is a business. I need someone who understands that."

Thankfully, JT had a short list of trustworthy people. Many



were growers themselves, who had given up due to high competition and instead supported

"I can't have them fucking up my grow with shitty work, you know?"

more eager, younger growers. A few were seasoned trimmers with a great reputation.

For more information about how to become a trimmer or budtender in California, follow this link!



Overexplain and Expect Perfection

JT isn't a talker, but when he does talk, he wants to make sure his point is understood. Walking through his garden with him, he paid careful attention to the cuts his trimmer was making.

"Just take the B cuts," he explained. "I already pulled the A cuts last week. I want to make sure we get everything we can from the plants, and that's still perfectly good bud."

The trimmer rolled her eyes slightly and smiled. She was obviously used to his protectiveness of his crop.

Like many growers in town, JT was using a tiered harvesting system to get the most out of his plants. When the first buds were ready, he'd go through and remove the premium buds, those he called A cuts. Then, after a few weeks, he'd return to remove the B cuts. These cuts were typically close in quality to the first ones, but sometimes do not have enough time to bloom into the densest buds possible. The C-cuts are removed just before the plant is taken down, and are sold as off cuts for edibles and topicals.

Follow this link to learn how to make the perfect Marijuana edibles!







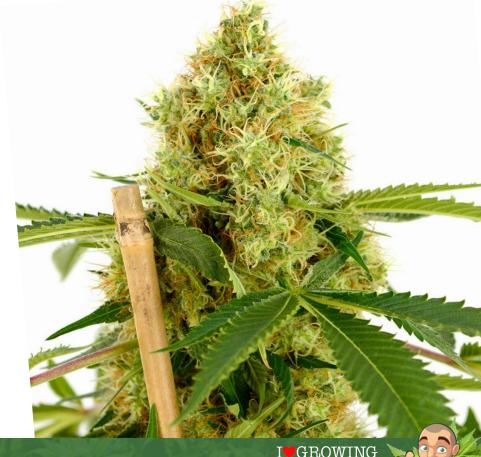
Knowing when to harvest

Harvesting is a combination of art and science. JT doesn't rely on just one method to know when his ladies are ready. You can download the Harvesting Guide to learn when to harvest!

"I use a jeweler's loop, but many old-timers can just look at it and feel it. You don't need one, but it's good if you are interested in seeing the transition."

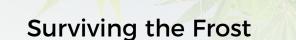
In addition to the loop and the hardness of the buds, he also considers weather conditions such as hail, rain and temperatures. Sudden drops in temperature (like what happened this year) can be devastating to gardens, and JT is next to his ladies enough to know when they can't handle the stress.

"I've been out there in the rain trying to take plants down before," he reminisced, but quickly added that he was not caught by surprise. "The plant knows when it is on its way out, you just have to know how to recognize the signs."



MARIANA

The plant is ready for harvest when 70-90% of the pistils are brown! Taste and effect are at their peak and you've achieved maximum weight...



A good mixture of plants may have saved JT's garden from disaster this year. Rather than growing the same type of plants, he chose to cultivate both indica dominant and sativa dominant strains. He also grew from seed and clones.

Check here our Indica dominant strains and here our Sativa dominant strains!

This year, his clones were not prepared for the early frost. As a result, those plants had to be taken down earlier than planned, missing out on their ability to be further harvested for B and C cuts. It was a huge loss of profit, but it could have been a lot worse, had they all been clones.

Through it all, JT stayed calm and focused, harvesting the hardest buds first and letting the lost buds go.

"The hardest buds will dry the fastest. Get them in and get them out. You're going to need that space to harvest other plants."

Want to know how to grow huge marijuana buds? Please follow the link!





JAMES, THE OLD TIMER

There wasn't a shortage of marijuana growers in this northern California town, and James was one of the reasons they were there. In the mid 60' he showed up in town as a long-haired renegade hippie who wanted to grow some weed. The locals weren't too happy to have him there, but over time, their opinion changed.

He didn't show me his garden, in fact, he didn't even admit to having one. He's never grown more than 20 plants at a time, and had no interest in making large amounts of money off of marijuana growing. He grew for enjoyment and politics. Sitting alongside two of his younger associates, the 80-something year old and I talked about how harvesting has changed since he started.

Plants have changed

Fifty years ago, marijuana plants didn't produce as much weed as they do now. Selective breeding has made it easier to grow a lot of marijuana from a single plant.

"The plants seem to make more limbs now. We used to have to create more limbs through training. I've noticed that these newer plants make more limbs without my help and make more buds."

Do you know how much Marijuana you can yield per plant? Follow the link!







How much weed does one person need?

Northern California has been growing marijuana for decades, and James helped make the region popular for it. However, he thinks the practice has gotten a bit out of hand.

"If you're not in it for the money, six plants will supply all the marijuana product that you and your friends could possibly need. While there's nothing wrong with growing for money, when you grow 1000 plants, you are just being greedy."

James voiced his concerns about the impact of excessive growing on the environment, particularly the watershed. Unlike the rest of the state, Northern California contained many mountain streams, and was not impacted by drought. Unfortunately, large scale grows were putting a strain on this water supply, impacting local communities and perhaps the rest of the state.

"What do you need all that money for? Show some personal restraint. These kids don't know that."









Harvesting a guerilla grow

James grew marijuana when it was highly illegal, so he is an expert at all types of guerilla growing. He shared a story of how he managed his grow:

"My friends and I hiked through the mountains until we found a stream. We ran a pipe underground from the stream up to a sunny cliff. No one would think to look for marijuana there because there's no water sources. We buried the pipe so that the bears wouldn't get to it and break it to drink from it.

I'd send my girls to the grow around harvest time to pick the buds. They'd then throw them into backpacks and meet me at the bottom of the hill in a waiting truck. There we were, like gremlins, emerging from the mountains with 80 pounds of wet bud on their back. I then drive it back to my drying room."

Knowing your plant is ready

Although bud density is a factor, James primarily uses pistil color to determine when it is time to harvest.

What is a pistil?

"The little white hairs start turning brown. When that happens, the pollen can't get to the stamen. That is a sure-fire sign that the plant will not be putting on any more THC, so you might as well pick it".

Of course, many commercial growers are more concerned about weight, because heavy buds earn more money. However, for the highest quality, pistil color is his method of choice.





In defense of the stem and seeds

Everybody knows that you can't smoke marijuana stems, and over time, products that include stems have been considered inferior. James thinks this trend is silly.

"Marijuana is a social activity. You have your fresh bud in a tin can on your coffee table. You invite friends over and you roll a joint. You want to reach in and show them a beautiful tight bud before you share. You pick it up by the stem. You can't do that with the tiny buds they sell nowadays, they're just embarrassing."

He also insists that the plant matter around seeds is the best smoke possible.

Seeds are Better

Although many of the growers I spoke to used clones, James was not a fan. "Most people around here grow from clones, because they don't want to worry about sexing them. I always grew from seed."

Chewing slowly, James explained how he watched his plants for the development of balls and yanked them out the minute he saw one. I waited patiently for him to finish, then mentioned feminized seeds.

"Well, that makes it easy, but you still have to make sure," he chuckled.

How to Survive a Frost

Many of the growers I spoke to were panicked by this year's unexpected frost. James, had some advice for nervous growers. "If you have a severe frost, mist them with some water in morning prior to sunbreak. They'll be okay."

That is, of course, if you were growing from seed.



THE TRIM SCENE

Although the growers are responsible for producing the marijuana, the trimmers make sure it's ready to be enjoyed. There was no shortage of trimmers in this small town. In fact, starting in late summer, international people in their twenties start showing up in town, expensive hiking backpacks strapped to their backs, ready to trim marijuana. Some locals call them trimmigrants, migrant weed workers who approach growers for work in exchange for a place to stay and some weed to smoke.

The importance of good trimmers

The harvesting process can be lengthy, especially if you are growing a lot of plants. One challenge with outdoor growing, is that freshly cut plants must be dried as soon as possible, to prevent the development of mold. Trimmers (and trimming machines) help large scale growers prepare flowers for drying before mold becomes an issue.



The amount of time saved by using trimmers can be substantial. A good trimmer can spend ten hours cutting the tiny leaves and stems from marijuana buds. They also help with take down, removing branches from plants prior to the final trim.

Making trimming easier

Trimming takes time, and is often the most frustrating part of the harvesting process. However, you can make it go faster by selecting plants that are easy to trim. Bill recommends using strains that have a good bud to leaf ratio. In other words, plants that produce big, juicy buds and not a lot of leaves.

ROWING

WORDS OF ADVICE FROM THE GROWERS

"Don't freak out. Remember, your plant is resilient, and it will be ready when it's ready. You can really overthink this." –JT

"Don't try and measure your harvest before you harvest. You'll either be disappointed or just ruin the surprise." —Sue

"Even if you've been doing this for three or four years, you've only done it four times. It's not hard to grow marijuana, but it is difficult to master it. Do it at least four times. Even I feel like I'm still learning." —Bill

"Harvesting is part of a lifestyle. Don't rush the process. Do it because you love it." –James





EPILOGUE

Thank you very much for reading the Harvest Journals. I hope this information was useful and helps you through the harvest. As you know, there are hundreds of marijuana growing-related articles on my website. You will also find an active marijuana grow support forum, moderated by expert marijuana growers.

If you are looking to buy viable quality marijuana seeds, visit my seed bank and read some of the reviews. We ship our seeds worldwide and guarantee arrival and germination.

I'm always looking for growers who can help build the website by writing articles, leaving comments, becoming a moderator on the forum, or telling their friends about us. So don't be shy and leave me a message if you want to contribute.

Happy growing,

Robert Bergman





ILGM PLACES OF INTEREST



Learn every important step from seed to bud with our Grow Guides.



Buy the perfect strain in our seedshop and start growing!



Our experts will help you with all your questions on the Grow Support Forum.



Show your bud and win The Bud of the Month contest!



Wear a T-shirt of your favorite brand! Check our merchandise.



Earn money with promoting us! Check our Affiliate program.



Learn from other growers' experience! Take a look at our Grow Journals.



More information about the law or the climate influencing your grow.



Questions about the medical effects? Take a look here!

