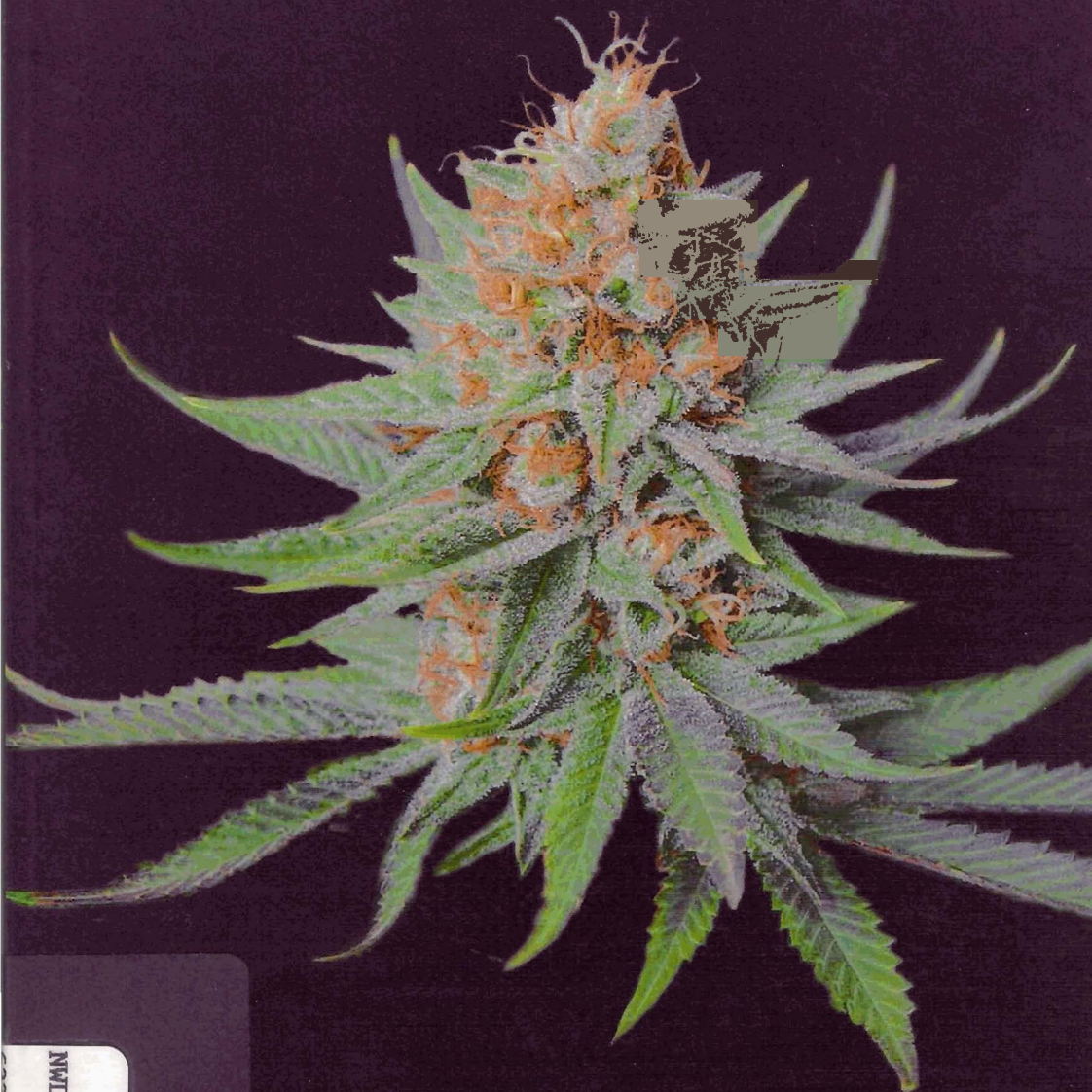


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Organic Marijuana Soma Style



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The Pleasures of Cultivating Connoisseur Cannabis

by Soma



Finishing with Finesse—The Harvest

Now we are getting to my favorite stage of growing: the ripening of the fruit, the flowers. The most important thing to remember is this: **Don't get so excited about your sweet smelling bud that you pick it before it's done.** The worst thing you can do is pick it early. My motto is "if it looks ready wait a week." Knowing how to judge ripeness in fruits, plants and people is an art worth cultivating.

Quality Ripening-The Final Weeks of Flowering

In the sixth week of flowering, you probably have about 3 or 4 weeks to go. There are a few extra precautions you can take to insure a healthy, insect-free harvest. Assuming that you sprayed neem oil twice a week up to the beginning of the fourth week of flowering, you should have no insect problems. At this point you cannot spray neem oil any longer, as you would ruin the taste of the weed. What you can do is put a container of ladybugs in your grow space as well as a container of predator mites. I like to think of my space as the place where the ladybugs come to dance, these friendly little creatures are great role models for us, never fighting amongst themselves. When it's the hot time of year spider mites can multiply very quickly as can thrips and white flies. With the ladybugs and predator mites getting the stronghold first, possible invaders have no chance.

In the last weeks the plants start to use less water so it is important not to over-water them. Keep close contact with your plants and their hydration needs. Over-watering can cause the buds to mold from the inside out. From the outside, the bud looks perfectly fine but is ruined on the inside. I only feed the plants through the seventh week, then for the last 3

weeks I water them just enough to flush the fertilizer from the soil, which leaves the plants tasting clean.

When your plants are in the sixth week of flowering there is a fine technique of rolling a special type of spliff. You roll a joint of some of your favorite weed (preferably some you grew with your own hands and heart), then you take it and gently roll it on the resin glands of your glistening buds. After a few moments of gentle rolling, you will see clear sticky resin coating the outside of the rolling paper with a natural kind of hash oil. You are ready to light it up. It's one of my favorite ways of smoking cannabis and can only be done in the sixth week of flowering.



Knowing When to Harvest

I know I've said it before, but I can't stress this enough—in my three decades of cannabis cultivation and research, I again point out that the most common problem growers have is picking their plants too early. I am always repeating this because it is the most common problem with cannabis growers. It is one of the most important things I can tell you.

Not knowing the correct time to cut plants down is the downfall of many growers out there. In the Amsterdam coffeshops, shop buyers continually turn down marijuana that has been picked too early. Growers that count on their crop to feed their families would have to change jobs if they picked their crop early.

Anyone who has tried a green banana knows that they don't taste very good, especially when compared to a nice yellow one with some brown spots. With cannabis it is even more drastic. Buds that are not ripe are not fun to smoke, providing you with burning cellulose instead of THC. Only ripe buds have THC with enjoyable and medicinal effects.

Cannabis that is picked early has the chlorophyll smell of fresh cut lawn grass. When it is picked on time it has a strong perfume that smells like the finest hash.

Since it matters so much, why is harvesting early such a common mistake? Why do growers pick early? Most home growers pick their plants too early because of money stress. The other reason is often a security breach of some sort.

New growers may get seeds, check the flowering time for the strain, and proceed to pick their plants on an exact calendar date whether they are ready or not. What they forget is that many factors can stunt a plant's growth, prolonging its maturation time.

As the smell becomes more intense, potential trouble with neighbors may cause a gardener to become paranoid. The fear of getting in trouble or losing the rewards of one's efforts often makes people hurry to harvest.

Another reason people pick too early is not having anything good to smoke. When there's nothing to smoke and the plants are close to finishing, a few more days may seem insignificant. But harvesting plants before they truly finish will result in missing the best part. Most people don't realize what they have done until the weed has dried and they taste it.

Therefore, the next part may seem obvious, but I want to stress some things *not* to do.

Don't look in your wallet for the date of the harvest. In your wallet you will only find things that have to do with money. Money should not be a factor for determining when the harvest is done. Try to avoid this mistake.

Harvesting by the calendar does not work well at all. Don't look at the calendar except for knowing when the full moon and new moon are taking place. When the moon is waxing it's a good time to plant and transplant; when it's waning, it's a good time to harvest.

Plants can be stunted by things like over-watering, over-fertilizing, cold or hot temperatures, and insect damage that can throw your calendar date off. If you experienced any setbacks in the course of gardening, expect the crop to take a little longer than the suggested times, or longer than other crops you've grown of the same variety without such problems.

Harvest with your heart, let your heart guide you. Become good friends with your plants, and look to them for the right moment for harvesting. It takes patience to grow good medi-

cine. You can't push the river. Always look to the plants. Just as there's an exact point in time when the green tomato turns red, or the green banana turns yellow, the plants will tell the gardener with the green thumb who is paying attention to their language. Study your plants closely at the time of harvest to make sure they are truly ripe, and you will be rewarded with true medicine.

So what does ripeness look like? White hairs are no longer forming on the buds of your cannabis plants. All the places where the red hairs are, the calyxes, are very swollen, and many visible THC crystals can be seen. These are the indications of ripeness that mean it is time to harvest. The second color section shows plants at different stages of ripeness to help clarify what you are looking for.

To double check, smell the top of the plant. Rub it with your fingers and smell your fingers. If it smells like the most wonderful hash perfume you ever smelled, then you are ready to harvest the fruit of your labor.

Remember: It's not the white hairs that get you high; not the red hairs either. The part of the cannabis plant that gets you high is the trichomes on the calyx of the plant. Letting the calyxes get swollen with trichomes is the secret to great tasting weed.

One of the handiest tools to aid you in harvesting at the right point of ripeness is a small microscope or photographer's loupe. With this little device, you can check out the trichomes on your live plant. You are looking for slightly amber-colored, liquid-filled balls on top of a stalk. If all the trichomes are clear it is too early to pick. When they start to look a little milky they are getting close. When one-third of the trichomes are amber, you are looking at ripe marijuana.

Harvesting & Drying

Harvesting cannabis has got to be one of my favorite acts on planet Earth. It is a fulfilling experience to harvest any crop that you have been cultivating with your heart and hands. I think that cannabis is even more gratifying—after all, you are serving as a guardian to one of the main sacred plants.

I want to remind all of you that your thoughts create your reality. It is important to think positive life-affirming thoughts when working with your plants. These sacred plants are sensitive to what kinds of thoughts are happening around them. They dislike thoughts of greed and power, but of course it's up to you.

Harvesting cannabis is definitely more intense than harvesting other crops, such as apples. In many ways, though, it is similar to an apple harvest. In harvesting a fair amount of apples, you need a good working team who you can trust and depend on, and you need the tools of the trade. You need ladders, apple baskets, a place to wash the apples, containers for storing and packing, and someone to do quality control, making sure that there are no bad apples in the bunch.

With a cannabis harvest you need a totally reliable team of people you can trust, and you need some important tools of the trade. You need some pruning shears, sharp sturdy scissors, clothesline that you can hang the plants on, a smell-proof room that's dry and cool, and if possible a T-55 silkscreen to work over when manicuring.

List of Supplies

Pruning shears (enough for your team)

Sharp sturdy scissors (enough for your team)

Clothesline

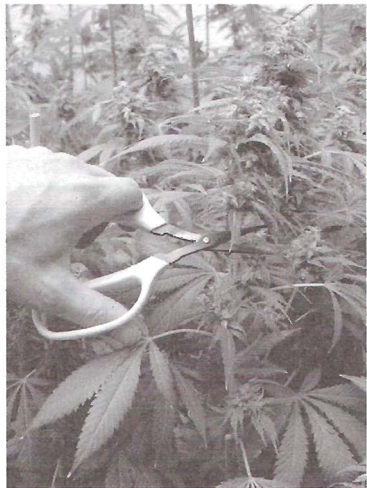
T-55 silkscreen

It's important to give a lot of thought to where and how you will dry your crop. Drying cannabis has an extremely strong odor and can grab the attention of your neighbors, so you must prepare for this.

Charcoal filters work well. The filter sucks the smell through the charcoal making it undetectable. Some growers already have a filter in their grow room, and they turn the grow room into the drying room after they turn the lights off. The room where the plants are dried should be cool in temperature and low in humidity.

Taking the pruning shears you cut the plant underneath the bottom branch, and then you remove only the large fan leaves, saving them to cook with. Then you hang the plants up.

Hanging the plants upside down on a clothesline is easily done by using the natural crooks of the plant. Select a strong bottom branch, then hang that branch over the clothesline. Keep hanging your plants in a row being careful not to crowd them too much. I leave them hanging with just the exhaust fan sucking air out through the charcoal filter. This lets them dry slowly with no heaters or dehydrators. It usually takes at least 10 to 14



The trimming scissors in action.

days to dry before you start the final manicuring. Drying faster makes the taste disappear and makes the buds crumbly. Again, patience pays off. Letting the plants dry slowly makes them taste much better and helps them to keep much longer. They are dry enough when the stem snaps. Buds dried in this fashion are usually teardrop-shaped.



Plants hung up to dry.

The ladybugs will disperse as the plants dry. When I hang the plants upside down in the room, they make their exodus. Many stay alive until the next planting. They also make many babies. You know that your ladybugs have made babies when you see strange looking crawling bugs that are longer than the adult ladybugs. They have different markings than adult ladybugs. They don't mate, they only eat.

Manicuring

Now comes the part when you call in your trustworthy team of friends. To manicure efficiently, you need a sturdy large table (glass ones work very well) with your T-55 silkscreen

placed over it. Make sure that the table is underneath the entire screen. Next arrange comfortable seating around the table for you and your friends, with each person having their own sharp sturdy scissors. Really fun music enhances the mood.

Make sure the plants are dry enough. I take one of the stems and try to snap it. If it is still rubbery, it's not dry enough to manicure. You have to wait until the stem snaps with a good snapping noise. Only then do you know it is ready for manicuring.

I only use scissors when cutting the stems. I take the extra-fine leaf off with my fingers. After a while you adopt quite a fine technique of moving your fingers carefully around the dried buds, making sure not to damage the best part, but also making

sure to remove every bit of extra leaf. I keep the fine leaf trim that is manicured from the buds in a bag to use later for making water hash, which is one of my favorite medicinal products. It is described in chapter 8. As the plants are moved and clipped, resin glands fall off and collect under the silkscreen. The silkscreen has filtered them separately from the leaf material, so the loose glands can be collected when the manicuring is complete. This material is kief and can be smoked as-is or pressed into hash.



A manicuring party.



Resin accumulates on the fingers while manicuring. This fresh finger hash is worth collecting and saving.

While manicuring, resin builds up on your fingers where you have been constantly touching the plants. This is finger hash and is worth saving. When you have a good amount, first gently rub off any leaf that is sticking to your fingers without disturbing the resin. Then rub your resinous fingers together over a small bowl until the hash comes

off. You can roll the hash in the bowl together into one piece and voila: you have a fresh piece of organically grown charas.

As the buds are manicured, I place them on top of a screen to finish drying out or cure. They should snap when broken in half. This may just be a few hours or overnight.

I place the cured buds in glass jars or sealing bags and let them rehydrate for 8 hours or overnight. Being in the closed jar makes the buds draw moisture from the inside of the stem to the outside of the buds. I then crack open the jars and leave them open for a few hours. I wait until the buds are feeling just right in consistency, texture, smell, and flavor. They should not be wet, nor should they be crumbly. They should burn well when lit and have a tangy smell to them. They are now ready to be stored. I keep the jars in a cool dark place. They are good for at least 18 months.

Smoking sacred herb that you grew with your friends and family is one of the most fun and fulfilling actions that can be done by any aspiring hippie. Seeing the medicinal grade weed that you grew truly help someone who is very ill with something like cancer, can bring tears to your eyes. Growing sacred herb is powerful stuff, treat it with integrity and it will help you find integrity within yourself.