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In Defense of Outdoor Grown Marijuana

In their ongoing campaign to smear sun-grown marijuana produced under the great blue sky, as nature and evolution truly intended, the indoor and greenhouse growers have now taken to calling it "dirty pot." I can see why they do it; they have to. Their cost per unit to produce their final end product is so much higher that they want to eliminate any competition, real or imagined. And do they ever apply their imaginations in discrediting outdoor weed. Where the "dirty pot" rap comes from is anybody's guess, but I imagine that there are two main schools of thought. In hot arid areas there is bound to be a lot of windblown dust which will stick to the trichomes of unprotected outdoor marijuana. Not that dust in and of itself is unhealthful, and given the standards applied to "bag appeal" in today's market most of it will be trimmed away from the pretty but definitely overworked buds. Secondly, the indoor growers in particular don't have as many options in their selection of organic fertilizers, especially fish emulsion and a variety of manures. Dried and pulverized bat guano is popular everywhere being championed the most by Soma. But greener manures used in compost teas reek to high heaven while fish emulsion will send applicators scurrying out of the greenhouse or the grow room holding their noses and vowing to never use it again. Outdoors the smell is tolerable and all but gone in an hour. Also, there is the phobia associated with what, after all, is shit, and if its shit, it must be dirty.

The truth is that most mankind controlled grows use industrial fertilizers and non-natural pesticides. Neem oil, which is pressed from the seeds of the Indian Neem tree, is deemed organic and is fine but not particularly effective in large indoor grows, while anything else that's a chemical is just plain bad. Rarely are natural pest control measures applied indoors. The lab coat crowd just can't warm up to anything living doing a better job than they can. They might tolerate cute little lady bugs, but lacewing wasps and menacing appearing praying mantis are just too much for them to bear. So consumers can rest assured that somewhere in the preponderance of the time necessary to bring a mankind controlled grow to fruition some unnatural fertilizers and pesticides have been used. The buds, due to aging and flushing techniques, may not test positive for them, but they were used just the same.

The indoor growers love to boast that they are in control of everything and therefore are capable of producing better pot than mother nature, but I feel this instinctively, I feel it deep in my bones, that every time mankind tries to improve upon or tweak mother nature, the more she comes right back around to prove that she had a better plan all along. It's what mankind isn't aware of that frightens me the most. Just as Big Pharma has to isolate every component of a naturally occurring drug or it's worthless to them, the cannabis control freaks have to isolate every factor of growth, and in so doing promote strains that bend to their will. Other strains with other attributes that could potentially avail themselves in the future are ignored, forgotten about, and eventually culled out of existence. This is natural selection in reverse, and a price will be paid if mankind continues to insist upon these enforced extinctions.

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The mankind controlled growers have short circuited the evolutionary processes that are evidenced in the fast disappearing landrace strain of cannabis. Any garden variety biologist or naturalist will tell you that ecosystems are the healthiest when they display the greatest amount of *diversity*, and because of space limitations and a very controlled maturation timing regimen, most man controlled grows are a monoculture. One unforeseen pest or disease will wipe the entire population out. Indoor growers almost always opt for indica strains that are shorter and mature more quickly than sativa strains. Crosses between the two strains do produce more strains but they are limited in their ability to withstand the elements outdoors so their chances of escaping into the wild and positively contributing to the gene pool are slim indeed. The primary goal of the indoor grower is fast crop rotation. The more harvests per year the more profitable the entire operation is. They are constantly culling slow growing stock and cloning the (pardon the pun) early bloomers in an endless quest for rapid growth, but any decent botanist knows that fast growth equates to weak stem tissue, and weak stem tissue, due to the ease of penetration, is far more prone to attack.

When left to her own devices, somewhere, somehow Mama Nature has natural processes at work forming a superior product. It usually takes longer because the evolutionary processes are more complex than ruthless culling, but in the end she will produce a far more superior climate and soil adapted strain. About the only advantage I can definitely see to growing in enclosed environments comes with the ease with which carbon dioxide can be introduced because it certainly spurs plant growth. But too much of anything can be a bad thing, and I firmly believe that it will eventually come out that there is some negative consequence associated with this form of environmental enrichment.

The “control everything” crowd likes to say that outdoor marijuana has a heavier smoke, as if that’s a bad thing. They like their weed smooth and light, and if that’s their preference, they’re certainly entitled to it. But to say their type of smoke is automatically better is like saying that Coors beer is better than Heineken. It’s all in the taste buds of the beholder. They like to argue that the buds of outdoor weed look rougher which, again, only matters to the worshiper’s of bag appeal, and again, I personally doubt the potency of pretty over manicured bud. Smoke it and get high like a real stoner, don’t get all jiggy looking at and ogling it like a rank amateur.

The enclosed environment growers point out that the outdoor grower is at the mercy of the elements. For those in less than perfect environments this is most assuredly true, and let me add that there is no such thing as a perfect environment. There’s always something, but I’ll take my chances because I’m located one degree in latitude south of and 200 feet lower than Kabul Afghanistan with infinitely better soil. They have been making it happen for centuries, so I can endure whatever years I have left. Note to readers, if you want me, I’ll be in my garden tending my weed. You should be so lucky.

Many advocates for indoor weed claim that indoor growers cure their marijuana better than outdoor growers simply because it’s assumed that nothing ever goes outside. Oh really? It’s never transported to a separate

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trim house? With the space limitations indoor growers have a lot of the pre-trimming, manicuring, drying, and final cure are done elsewhere. I have a great trim house with three exceptional hang rooms. My office is set up for long sessions as I become a cola pre-trimming machine during football season. Every experienced trimmer has to have their spot that is specific to their body type and general demeanor. I go in there; shut the door, crank on a game on the television, and everyone knows to leave me the hell alone. Every few hours or so, I call for an associate to come in and get another bucket of trimmed colas to hang while I march out to the garden to collect fresh ones. I have to be driven to stay ahead of four manicurists and single-minded in letting them know the entire operation is more productive if they can do whatever they can to keep me in that chair.

Some of the pot brokers are the worst of the worst and criticize me for refusing to further break down my beer can size buds. They'll say my bags look "stemmy" because every large bud has to be held together by a larger section of base stem. Bullshit. They want those little teeny-weenie buds because that is most typically all an indoor grower can produce, and I know for a fact that my weed is just as good, if not better than theirs, and what the brokers are really trying to do is pass it off as indoor based on a misguided and entirely misinformed bag appeal standard alone. And the turkey bags some of the brokers insist on; don't get me started. They are no more moisture proof than high quality zip lock bags, but they are clearer and shine up the bud better. The zip locks are easier to use, stack better, and much easier to access when it becomes inevitable that the weed needs to be rehydrated. Some of the brokers would use smoke and mirrors if they thought it would make them another nickel. And then there are the bottom feeders who want to buy your trim for next to nothing and reap huge profits with extracts. They always make the point that it has no value to the grower who simply doesn't have the time to mess with such complicated process. There's bubble bag hash and heat pressed rosin that are natural processes that are about as simple as it gets. What they are referring to is wax and shatter processed with butane, and here again, I would like to see the governor of California outlaw any chemically manufactured extracts. They need to be prepared naturally and organically or nothing at all. When you think about it, the processed ganja movement is defined by two groups: the baby boomers who are returning to weed in droves and the kids who keep pushing the potency envelop to the breaking point. This pretty much mimics the division between outdoor and indoor growers – the old school versus the new school. The youth are comfortable with unnatural processes, and the old wouldn't dream of using any of them. Know that I hate to be seen as a stubborn old geezer too stuck in his ways to get out of theirs', which will be a moot point soon enough because we will shortly die off, but my biggest fear is that so too will the better living through chemistry loving kids if they don't cool it. That would be a real tragedy for the movement because the, "no one has ever overdosed on marijuana," argument would go the way of the dinosaur.

I'm a realist, however. I know that perceptions pervade reality. I know many good marijuana brokers who believe in their hearts that indoor is better. The opinion of the market place always set the price, so I don't argue with being paid less for something that is just as good, because

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I'm not going to lie and pass my bud off as indoor, even though I know I could. For the record, I won't back down from my stance. I'll put my weed up against anyone else's anywhere, anytime and let the chips fall where they may. I'm not infallible or undefeated. I have been beaten on occasion, but always by an outdoor grower.

There is something primal about outdoor growing that goes straight back to that time in history when the majority of mankind opted to go from a hunting/gathering existence to a farming paradigm. The value of the land rose dramatically then, and a man's attachment to it became almost paternal. Take any man, or take me for instance; I love the cycle of the seasons, the burst of spring growth, the dog days of summer, the work of the harvest, the rest of the winter. I love the sun biting at my bare back, the smell of the soil, the soft summer breeze. I love the challenge of bucking up in late winter and accepting the challenge of taking on the elements for another year. But most of all I love the sense of satisfaction of bringing it in, of surviving, and being rewarded for it. The life of the indoor grower seems boring to me. He/she probably works harder than I on balance, and I commend them for doing it, but once they get it down it's all pretty much the same. One crop rotation spills into another, any lines demarcating the seasons blur: same shit – different day, which day is it, anyway? Outdoors, every season is different and you remember them all for their distinct characteristics. Diversity – remember? Diversity is what makes the cycle of life go round. The diversity of the seasons makes my heart beat harder for each and every one. I couldn't stand to be cooped up indoors. That would drive me insane, and I can only imagine that it's worse for the plants.

The carbon footprint of indoor marijuana is astronomical in comparison to sun grown, and the strain it puts on California's third world electrical grid is becoming enormous. All growers' need fluorescent lighting to establish clones or seed stock to get their season or grow rotation kicked off, but that's as much that artificial lighting should stress the electrical grid. I'd like to see governor Moonbeam, or soon to be Governor Mc-Dreamy step in and decree that all indoor and greenhouse light deprivation marijuana cultivated for the purposes of harvesting for eventual sale can only be grown using lighting sources strictly dependent upon *solar energy* to power them. That would be a game changer, and I would revel in seeing just how fast the smear campaign against outdoor weed would come to an abrupt end, not to mention the stabilizing effect it would have on dispensary price structures. The carbon footprint would virtually disappear except that which is used to produce the solar panels and operating equipment. All manufacturing produces some carbon as a byproduct, that's unavoidable.

Consider that the sun's natural light spectrum produces more cannabinoids and terpenes, which concurrently increases the plant's potency and taste. All other factors being equal, outdoor weed has tested at least one percentage point higher in THC than its indoor grown counterpart.

While reading the blogs of indoor growers an old school hardhead such as myself must feel like he's been dropped into the midst of a gaggle of mad scientists. It's all about the nutrients, adjust this, tweak that, better living through chemistry. Jefferson Airplane's "Go Ask Alice" for Christ's

sakes. How to escape an emergency situation that maybe they shouldn't have ever gotten themselves into in the first place. They all present themselves as experts who don't agree on anything, yet they're all convinced that they're right. That's the meat of it. That's the point I've been floundering to make all along. Successful outdoor growing, above all else, requires preparation, not panicked reaction. The soil is everything: turn it, amend it, worship it, and know that it's the base upon which the entire crop depends. Nutrients are an additional enhancement, nice to have but not essential, and certainly not the be all and end all of everything ganja.

I love to allow my plants to achieve their God given full genetic potential and cheer them on during "the stretch." This is that period of time that ensues after the first flowers appear, usually in early to mid August where the indicas bolt skyward for four weeks while the sativas do likewise for six or even more. A plant can literally double and occasionally triple in size during the stretch which I find awe inspiring while the indoor and green house growers are shitting their pants for fear of running out of room. Their blogs are rife with desperate cries for someone to tell them how to defeat the cursed stretch as if is as dangerous as a plague of locusts. It all seems so counterproductive in a business hysterically driven by the weight of the final end product to take every measure to slow down the development of that weight due to the lack of room. But that is exactly what they do. They top them, they contort and bend then, they pray fervently to the cannabis Gods for dreaded the stretch to come to an end. The sins of the grower's choice of environment are visited upon the plants, and it isn't good. Outdoors, the mantra of grower's during the dog days of summer is loud and clear: "let them grow, let them grow, let them grow!"

The worst of outdoor growing lies in the lack of seclusion. Sure I feel comfortable in the midst of my crop. I can't see ten feet ahead of me, and because of my enclosure, no one can see in, or so I foolishly allow myself to believe. Then here comes the helicopter. That fucking helicopter! Jesus god almighty, I hate that miserable fucking helicopter; and don't they know it. Hovering around, making lots of noise, shaking the plants with the wind turbulence from their whirring rotating blades, making the earth beneath my feet tremble almost as much as I do. Go away helicopter. Leave me alone. The indoor grower has none of that if he can stop the light leaks, and filter the smell.

Mankind's relationship with cannabis dates back centuries. Michael Pollen wrote an entire chapter about it in *The Botany of Desire: A Plant's View of the World* (2001). Not only does mankind like cannabis, but cannabis also likes mankind. Greg Green in the foreword to the second edition of his *The Cannabis Grow Bible* (2003) takes the same stance. There are many others who feel the same way: it's not a new point of view. This is figuratively and literally a symbiotic relationship. Each benefits from the existence of the other. Cannabis soothes and delights mankind, while mankind contributes mightily to the perpetuation of the species which is the primary goal of all life on earth. So in that sense, all growers are the friend of cannabis, but I like to believe that some growers are even better friends, specifically the outdoor growers.

I will give credit where credit is due and say all growers owe a debt of

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gratitude to the indoor cultivators of yore. They kept the movement alive during the dark ages of the Reagan/Bush I reign of terror. Even the great D .J. Short in his marvelous book *Cultivating Exceptional Cannabis* (2003), and an individual who advocates growing outdoors whenever possible, has a section entitled "The Great Indoors" because it's what kept him and others going until the laws and the social stigma of being a marijuana smoker changed.

Anyone growing marijuana either in a hall closet or out in the open on 20 acres is a member of a select fraternity of mankind. All are trying to somehow, someday improve this plant into whatever their image of botanical perfection is, so let's at least give them all a hand for that. If you love cannabis you must grow it as the ultimate expression of that love. We are really splitting hairs here in trying to argue which method is the best, because anyone who spends any significant amount of time around this marvelous natural creation comes to deeply revere it. This plant has drawn them in and now has them firmly within its clutches. Who's using who, in the final analysis?

Honesty being the best policy, why do I say that outdoor grown is better than indoor grown? Because, just like the indoor grower; I have to.