

# Cannabis cultivation for beginners



Cannabis cultivation can be a rewarding experience. **Thomas Walker** outlines the basic factors you need to consider before embarking on growing your own cannabis for recreational use.

As a beginner in cannabis production, you will almost certainly make mistakes. To limit these as far as possible, start simple. As your experience grows, you'll feel more confident about controlling more aspects of cannabis production. Here are some important aspects to consider:

- **Legislation**

Understand the law well; this will prevent you from landing in trouble should it be found that you have overstepped plant counts, or produced a genotype that is above the allowed limits when it comes to tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) content. (THC is the principal psychoactive constituent of cannabis.)

- **Security**

Whether you are cultivating indoors or outdoors, it is prudent to keep your crop away from prying eyes.

- **Utilities**

The availability of electricity is extremely important. Avoid overloading circuits and ensure that wiring is neat and labelled in case of emergency. Have an electrician install any additional plug points or wiring needed, and keep fire extinguishers close by.

- **Environment**

Assess the local environmental conditions, especially if you plan to grow your crop outdoors. High humidity, in particular, will create problems. Moreover, these problems will manifest themselves only at the end of the process, when it's too late and money has been wasted.

Another important factor to consider when producing cannabis outdoors is the daily light cycle and season. This will directly affect the number of harvests you can achieve in a calendar year.

When cultivating cannabis indoors, it is possible to control all environmental and lighting variables, but outdoor environmental conditions will still play a factor in the design of an indoor setup.

- **Sex**

Female cannabis plants produce the buds or flowers commonly cultivated for the active cannabinoids. Their biological function is to catch pollen from the male plant using stigmas, which protrude from a tear-shaped bract. Once pollen has been captured, the bract has been fertilised and a seed forms.

## WHEN PRODUCING CANNABIS, THE AVAILABILITY OF ELECTRICITY IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT

The only reason to keep male plants is for breeding. For cannabis production purposes, all male plants should be removed. This will ensure sinsemilla production (the development of buds without seeds). Pollinated female plants result in lower-quality buds.

Hermaphrodites have both female and male sex characteristics and are usually born from stress, genetics, or improper breeding techniques. Any plants that exhibit hermaphroditic tendencies should be removed from production as they are highly likely to pollinate themselves and other female plants.

- **Cultivation methodology**

The two main ways of growing cannabis is organically or hydroponically. It is best to start with organic cultivation;

hydroponics should only be used once a thorough understanding of cultivation has been achieved. Hydroponic cultivation problems can become serious very rapidly, whereas organic cultivation offers a buffer for errors.

- **Plant flow overview**

The cannabis life cycle will unfold in the following manner: propagation of seed > vegetation > flowering > drying > curing.

Each stage requires varying durations, environmental factors, nutrient strengths, lighting intensities, and light cycles to assure a consistent, high-quality product.

- The propagation of seed takes one to two weeks and needs high humidity; low nutrients; and zero to low lighting.

- Vegetation takes two to seven weeks and requires medium to high humidity; medium nutrients; medium lighting intensity; and a minimum of 18 hours of light per day.

- Flowering takes eight to 14 weeks and needs medium humidity; medium to high nutrients; medium- to high-intensity lighting; and a maximum of 12 hours of light per day.

- Drying takes seven to 14 days and requires medium humidity; no nutrients; and no lighting.

- Curing takes one to four weeks and requires medium humidity; no nutrients; and no lighting.

Oil can also be extracted easily from cannabis using cheap and effective equipment. Once extracted, it can be turned into a multitude of products such as tinctures, topical creams, capsules and suppositories.

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