



extractors, trimmers, vaporizers, books & **more!**

marijuana and hemp around the world

 [advanced search](#)[cc store](#)[pot-tv](#)[bcmp](#) CC Home

[backissues](#) -> [CC58](#) -> **Australian Bush Paradise**

by Joe Walsh (12 Dec, 2005)

An amazing Aussie outdoor shown' tell

Before I start, I want to let you know I am not a pot smoker, never have been. I do enjoy eating cookies and ingesting oil though, and I have no problem with other people smoking.

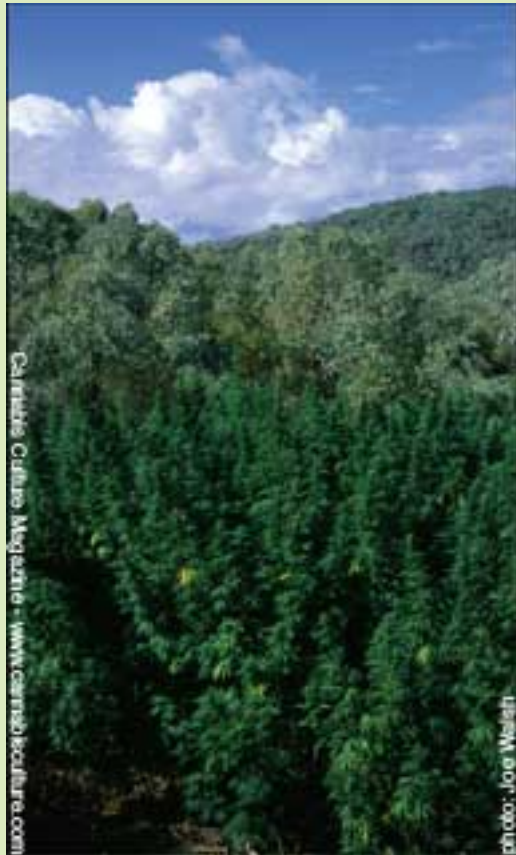
I am an Australian who is at the end of his pot-growing career. I went into the trade with a clear objective: to get out of the poverty trap and put myself into a position where I could do what I wanted without being screwed by the banks.

This last season, ending April/May 2005, I single-handedly pulled off 320 pounds of manicured bush pot, which the police will say is worth \$1,600,000 AUD. Unfortunately I only saw a fraction of that, as market realities dictate a much lower price. Along with that harvest, my partner and I pulled off 1000 pounds in his crop.



Growing pot has been a long road, full of surprises. I have learned a whole lot about who the faceless drug lords

you buy your pot from are. Really, we are just regular people who – for a whole list of reasons – are growing. Of course there are bike gangs, triads, and bad motherfuckers who grow too; but on the whole, where I come from, dealings are not like that at all.



the main patch

I am 33 years old and I've been growing full time for 4 years. I left school at an early age to help on the family farm. We produced bananas, but then the Australian government let Chiquita come in and import bananas from South America for a quarter of our cost price. We had only 100 acres and soon found ourselves in financial difficulty. It was just dad with seven children, as my mother left us to pursue a life without the burden of kids. To this day I haven't seen her again.

So dad went bankrupt and I, as the oldest, was hooked to a \$15,000 bill and asked to pay it or also go bankrupt. At 19 I didn't want to be handicapped later, so I agreed to foot the bill. Five years later, working three jobs seven days a week, I paid it off at thirty percent interest with no help from anyone at all. At the time I was working in Sydney as an apprentice plumber – that is, until the Olympics finished in 2000. Then the bottom fell out of the market, so I was on my bum. No money, no trade, and no incentive to do things the 'right way'. Why should I work as hard as I possibly could for someone and get peanuts for a wage, just so if I turned up late one time too many they could replace me in a flash?

So I applied to the armed forces. At least I would have a contract, guaranteed income for 6 years, and, if I saved hard, walk out of it with a few dollars. I was accepted and told, "You have up to a year to finalize your affairs. The bus leaves the first Tuesday of every month; just turn up when you are ready." So in that time, I decided to do something I have always wanted to do: go gold mining!

A New Calling

I arranged with a mate to go dredging up in the mountains near where I



come from (a little known gold field – very rich though) for a month. So we made our way up there and got stuck into it. As most of you know, things are often great in theory but seldom as good in reality. We stuck at it for 3 weeks and found only \$20 worth of gold!

At the same time my father came out to see what we were up to. He suggested I give him a hand with his growing venture. If it worked, we could split the profits. Looking at my dismal attempt to be a gold miner, I said fuck yeah!



germinated Emery Seeds

It was early November 2001. The growing season had started in September/ October. He took me to his patch, which was a real bugger to get to. We drove for kilometres along an ancient forest trail, down what could only be described as a big 'fuck off' hill, and parked the 4x4 at the bottom. We then turned around and walked back up along the road for another 2 kilometres. We turned off at a mark that only he knew, weaved our way through the bush for another hour, and down another hill that made the first one seem like a baby.

We went up a creek for another kilometre. As we were walking I picked up the faint but distinctive scent of immature pot. We rounded a bend in the creek, and there on the left I saw 900 square meters of happy, lithe pot plants, about 2 feet high. "Fuck," I said, "that is the most pot I have ever seen in my life." Dad had used 10 kilograms of seed in the patch! The pot had been planted by turning the soil, spreading the seeds, and turning the soil again.



Immediately I could see his problem. The plants were too close together; they had no room to put out branches. So we set to it: pulling out handfuls of plants for hours on end. I had the bright idea that if I found another area, we could transplant some of the pulled plants. I could keep the profits from that bunch, while the help I gave dad would pay for the help he gave me. We agreed that was fair, and I proceeded to look for a spot to grow



young females

the weed.

I needed an area that was accessible to water, had good sunlight coverage, and wasn't too close to the roads. I didn't want someone to stumble upon it. Easier said than done!

One morning I decided to take a walk down the creek I had been dredging for gold in. It was reasonably sized and wouldn't go dry in the summer. I gave it a shot. I walked down the hill, over waterfalls and through deep rainforest. The water was fine, but the unrelenting canopy was really no good.

I noticed that fairly recently a fire had been through and burned the undergrowth. I climbed up the very steep bank and began to push my way up to the ridge top. As I ascended the hill, the growth thinned out until at the top of the ridge it was bare: nothing but charred trees and a few young weeds. A forest fire had turned into a crown fire in this particular spot 6 months earlier and killed everything. The area at a rough guesstimate was about 100 acres! What total luck: it was a good 1.5 km from the nearest road, excellent water was at the bottom of the hill, there was sunlight from 7am till 8pm and deep beds of ash. It was made to order.

With no further waiting I started transplanting my little heart out, eventually transplanting about 1,500 plants. They were delicate, but I got a ninety-percent success rate.

I pitched my tent and started living full time in the patch. I had almost no money. When my father made it out to help me thin the patch, then later to de-male it, he would bring me all the supplies he could afford: canned food, a few greens, and dried meat. I lived like that for six months; three days a week helping him in his patch, the remaining four days a week living and working in my patch. I left the bush once every three weeks for a day just to keep in contact with my friends, but never let them know what I was up to.



As the season progressed I saw less and less of my father. For a little while I only saw him once a month for a few hours. By then, he was the only person that I had contact with at all. At times I could feel my mind begin to slip, and to this day I can have great conversations with the birds and the trees. They really do have great thoughts if you care to listen.



the water pump for the sprinklers

My father has poor eyesight, so when it came to removing male plants, he could only identify them when it was almost too late. The problem is that when there are 30,000 plants all 5-7 feet tall, you have to catch the males as early as possible; otherwise you end up with a heap of pot full of seeds. Not so good if you want to sell sensimilla, which is what everyone wants.



Cannabis Culture Magazine - www.cannabisculture.com

two of the many sprinklers installed at the site

We concentrated on removing males from his patch first, as he had considerably more males, and his crop was where the real money would come from. We had a water pump that he had found in the bush, probably from another grower. It looked like it hadn't been touched in at least five years, but it started first pull after replacing the fuel and oil. Good old Honda motors! I will never use anything else after witnessing that little miracle.

In the beginning, we humped in 40kg bags of urea, which is loaded with nitrogen. As the season progressed I brought in 500 kg of finishing fertilizer, to give the buds some weight. Dad has a bad back, so I did all of that slogging! The plants grew to be monsters, between 10-12 feet tall. Not a lot of branches, but plenty of nice long colas.

At the end of the season we harvested a total of 1,500 kg of wet pot (3,300 pounds) which became 160 kg (365 lbs) of dried pot, which became 75 kg (160 lbs) of manicured pot. It all had to be carried up that big 'fuck off' hill, which took a good hour just to get down.

As the season ended there came a spell of wet weather. With over a ton and a half of fresh pot, rain meant mold will break out in all the damp buds. We got it all halfway up the hill, out of the bottom of the gully. There the breeze moved a little so we set up a great big tent made out of tarps, and hung the pot out under the trees.

As luck would have it, the rain stopped, and in five days the pot was dry. We spent the next three days trimming into bags to be carried out, now fully cured.

After we had completed harvesting Dad's patch, I went and took care of my stuff, which fortunately – because it had been transplanted – was mature a little later. I noticed that some seeds I had planted in January actually did much better than the transplanted stuff, which were put in the ground in October. The transplant shock to the October plants was considerable so the plants that were started 3 months later did better. It's a wonder they thrived at all since they were pulled quite violently out of the soil.



shelter for the night

Through the growing season, I had built myself a house out of trees and tarps, put my gas stove into the house, and had my sleeping bag as a bed. Pretty rough, but better than sleeping in just a tent in the forest. Trees have a habit of dropping branches and trying to kill you. The house also doubled as a drying shed when the crop came in.

By this stage I had realized that there was some money to be made doing this, so I had given up any idea of joining the armed forces. 'I should be able to make in a year what I could save in six' were my thoughts, and by that time the shit regarding Afghanistan and Iraq had well and truly gone down. No way was I going to get mixed up in a war without a reason and with no end.

I cut the crop and brought it down to my camp, hanging it upside down throughout the house. There was so much

in there that it left me only a tiny little hole to sleep and eat in. I eventually had to hang it all under the trees, praying it didn't rain. It didn't. I then spent the next few days learning to manicure, a job I now greatly dislike.



sleeping arrangements

I was picked up and driven down to Byron Bay, where I checked in to the backpackers hostel. I had a grand total of \$20 to my name, and a pound of pot.

That night I sat back at the diner just watching everyone, knowing that I had only one shot at this and if I fucked it up then it was straight to the cops for me. There is always a resident dealer in the backpackers hostels, and fortunately he stood out like dogs' balls, so I approached him and explained that I had a little pot I needed to get rid of because I had no money. He was cool and just said to keep it low profile.

With that I approached a group of English guys and casually asked if any of them smoked. They all said yep, and I tossed a half-ounce on the table and asked if they could try it for me, as I didn't smoke, and I needed to know if it was ok.

Well they all dove for it, not believing their luck. Within ten minutes I had half the hostel asking if I wanted to sell them anything, so within three days I had offloaded my pound, and could afford to have a decent meal for the first time in six months. To this day I will not eat canned food!

There are only a few people who can actually pull off a crop. Over the years I have needed a hand from a few trusted mates whom I thought could do it. The problems always started in the walk in. None of them had ever done a 5 km walk in the bush loaded down with food for a week, and couldn't manage to keep a decent pace. It's also such a physical job that if your



work mate has a bad back – or any type of mental instability – it's going to be hell. Or they'll feel the need to go to the pub, or to be near friends, girlfriends, wives, or kids. There's only one way to do this job. And that is what it is: a serious job. If you approach it as 'a bit of fun', shit will happen.

Security is number one. There are people out there who just look for patches of pot to rob, and they use guns. I have met some of these people, and they make a living from it. Actually it is very easy to do; I have found many patches myself.

One day as we were driving to my father's patch I noticed a mark on the muddy bank of the road. I said to him, "Stop the car". I got out and inspected the mark. It was a boot print in the mud! I went up the hill, and not five meters from the road, there were about 200 plants. All of them were almost mature.

I turned around and went back to the car and informed my father. We decided to do nothing but to keep an eye on the situation. It was a matter of kilometres from where his patch was, and we were concerned that if we had found the patch so easily, then someone else could; and in looking for more, they might find us!



white rhino cross



So the next time I was in the nearest town, I popped into the local police station and picked up a couple of the area commander's business cards. On the hill again, as my father and I passed the same spot a week later, we saw that the boot print had become a track. Thinking the worst – that it had been discovered – we made our way into the patch and found that in fact, it had been fertilized! This was really not so good, so I grabbed a card out of the glove box and scribbled on the back "As you know, cannabis is illegal in the state of NSW. For enquiries regarding this matter please contact (commander's name). Address is on the front of this card."



purple bud

We then pulled out all the plants, left the card in the middle of the patch, and threw the plants in the back of the vehicle.

As we were driving I kept an eye out for more patches, and found another two spots with about 100 plants in them, but they were a bit better hidden so we left them. We really weren't

interested in their pot, but didn't want to be busted because someone else was careless.

We noticed a few weeks later that the other two patches were harvested and the guys never came back. I had stayed nearby for a couple of days to see just who these people were, and it was a father and son team. But they were smoking a little too much of their product to keep it together, had parked their car right next to their patch, and would call out loudly to each other. I guess they thought that because they were in the bush no one was out there. I have noticed that attitude quite a bit in the last four years.

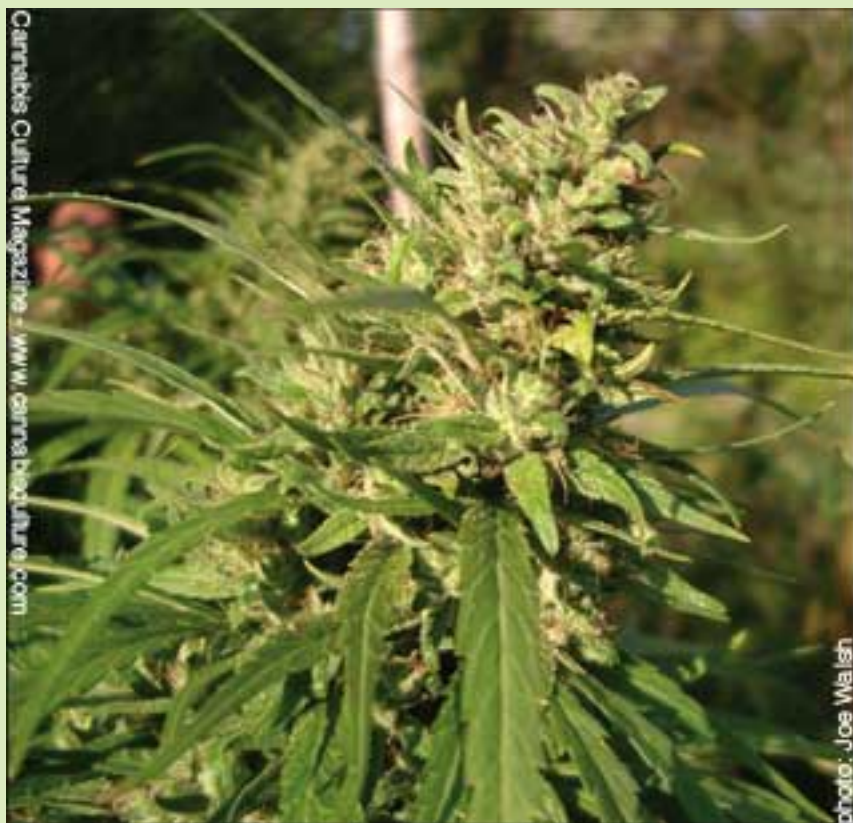
Of the 200 plants I knicked, I got a touch over 2 pounds after drying. For the amount of work and the danger involved in growing those plants and taking them out into the bush, those guys really wasted their time.

Paranoia is a part of the game, but not getting too carried away with it is the tricky part. You have to be so careful not to tell anyone anything. I have noticed with many people that they will ask questions slowly over a long period of time to try to find out which area you are in, so when it comes to details, the best trick I use is to actually pull them aside and say "Look, I don't want to be rude or anything, but understand this: anything I say regarding times



seconds of life left

or distances will be a lie. It is just my policy to not say anything correct at all".



big bud

There are people out there who know you have done a 10-pound deal, they see you get twenty grand in your hand, and think it's easy money. But when you are in the patch and a spotter plane is doing circles above you, you really think no matter how much this stuff will sell for, it isn't worth anywhere near as much as the sweat dripping off your brow. If you get busted, it could be 20 years.

In that first season I pulled in about 120 pounds. I still remember the first 10- pound deal I did.

I had rocked up to Nimbin late one Tuesday night and went to one of the large dealers' shops. I walked in to this tiny room filled with about fifteen guys who were all totally stoned. The conversation stopped as soon as I entered the room. In front of 'the man' there was an open Hessian sack with about 5 pounds of pot sitting there. The man looked at me and asked, "What do you want"?

By this time I had broken into a sweat; the room had had no fresh air for hours, and was hot. I said I had a little pot I wanted to sell – was he interested? He asked to have a look, I unslung my bag off my back, and everyone crowded around to give their opinion. He asked me how much I wanted; I said whatever was fair. He then got up and walked over to a kid, and started mumbling in his ear. The kid nodded his head, and the man came back to me and said, "This is my son. Go outside with him, leave the bag here, and you two will talk."

We went outside, and he said "It's ok, a bit stemmy; how about 1500 per



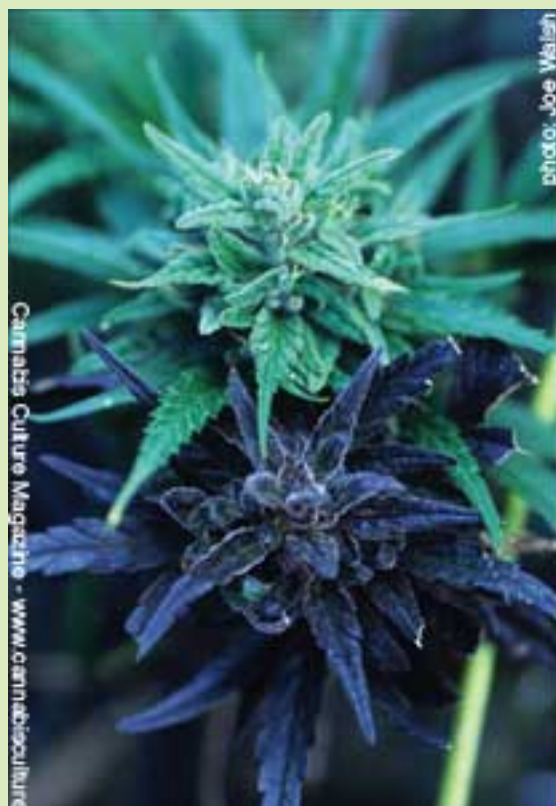
pound?" Done, I said, I have ten! He disappeared, I went back inside, and everything was as though I didn't exist. The man nodded at me, I nodded back, and he smiled. His son soon returned and gave me \$15,000 cash. I was stunned. Real money for a bag of pot.

After that, things got a little easier.

I always wondered just how you go about finding a customer who would consistently take large quantities of weed and be cool. As it stands, I have one main customer who, if I could supply him, would take 10 pounds a week every week of the year, and he is but one medium supplier out of hundreds in Sydney alone. He supplies only one suburb.



a half-albino plant



After I had made my 10-elbow deal I returned to Byron to relax for a few days. At the hostel I met this young backpacker. She knew that I was a grower who needed to find a distributor, so she suggested that maybe we should go to Sydney for a week or two, with some pounds on board, to look for a customer. As English is not her first language, she suggested we go to a house where her people meet. They all like to smoke but none of them are Aussies, and they are constantly on the lookout for a supplier.

So we turn up to this house that had about 20-30 backpackers living in it. She went over to a guy sitting on the couch and started talking in their language to him for about five minutes, and eventually he got up and came over to me and said, "So you have some ganja, yes? Come with me". I followed him into another room, and he told the occupants to leave.

He asked how much I had in total, and how much I wanted to sell. I showed my goods, he took one look, and said to me, "Look, in the sea there are a lot of fish,



green and purple bud growing side by side

some are bigger than others. I am only a little fish; you are a very big fish. Maybe I can get you to meet a fish that is bigger than me, and maybe you will not forget me if I call you one day soon". He gave me a number and told me to "call tomorrow at 10am exactly, but say nothing about me calling you one day, because he can eat me in one bite."

The next day I called the number, was given an address to go to, and told to bring my girl friend. We arrived at the location, and saw that the man was actually one of the people that were at the house the day before. He asked for my friend; they disappeared into the kitchen for around fifteen minutes, then he came out and said, "Your friend says that you are ok, and you are to be trusted. Let's do some business." I got the pot out. "How much?" he asked. I told him, and he got the money. "So my friend, next week, I call you."



looking down on the patch

I asked my girl friend afterwards what they were talking about in the kitchen. She said that they had to know who I was, and she said that she trusted me. She told him my story, how and when we met, and why she was with me. After that he wanted to know who she was, where she came from, and who her family was. Turns out that he knew of a cousin of hers, he was 'ok', so she was too. Because she was ok, so was I. To this day, he has been the most honest, reliable customer I have ever dealt with; always has money upfront, the transaction is a ten-minute affair in his home, and he's always happy with my product.



To give you an idea as to how things went that first year, I cleared around \$150,000. Of that I actually kept for myself around \$50,000, and the rest went into getting things ready for the next year. It is very expensive to grow pot: I built sheds, bought vehicles and tools, acquired firearms, set up an extensive radio network, opened a business (on paper), rented a house, developed relationships with local businesses, and generally had to become a regular good citizen.



a sunset after the harvest

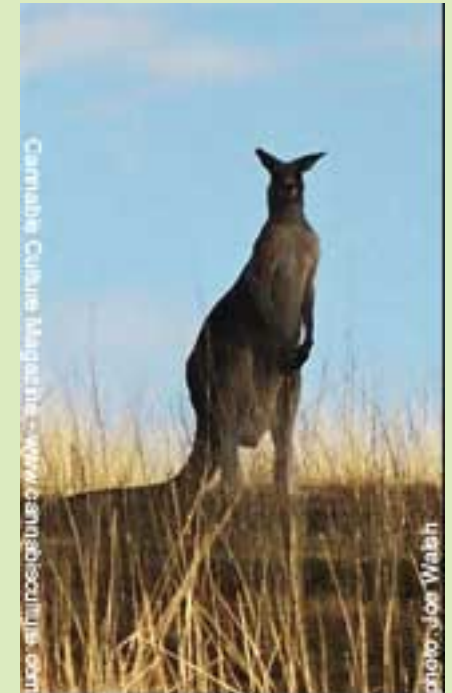
Then to carry it all off, while still growing a patch of significant proportions, is actually a juggling trick. But as I said earlier, it is a business, and that is the only way to approach the job.

PESTS & PROBLEMS

When growing pot there are literally one thousand and one things that will go wrong in the season. Nasty little critters are a big proportion of that. This is a list of the more common pests and problems that I have encountered in the bush.

Kangaroos

The worst offender would have to be kangaroos. They eat the baby leaves, which stops the plants from growing. Last season the kangaroos and wallabies cost me about \$50,000 in losses. There is only one way to deal with these bastards: leave some dead meat throughout the patch. Roos are herbivores, so the rotting meat keeps them away; blood and bone sometimes works, but every time it rains you have to put it out again. Usually what you have to do is shoot a roo and stake it to the ground in the patch. The problem then is that it attracts the goannas, six foot long lizards that are fierce meat-eaters, and dangerous. Goannas fight over the carcass, and flatten the pot plants, so it is a bit of a catch-22 situation. I've got a scar from a vicious bite from a goanna; bled for hours! I ended up just leaving an 'offering patch' for the kangaroos, isolating them in one area. Hurts a bit to do so; but alas, they were there first.



kangaroo



Parrots

Parrots are an unlikely pest, but they are terrible. They will not bother you if you have managed to keep the crop sensimilla, but if there is just one



parrot

plant with just one seed in it, they will find it and strip that plant back to the stalk looking for more seeds, and once that's finished they will systematically move through the plantation looking for more. It makes you cry to get into the patch and watch 40-50 birds alight from the crop, and see colas and buds scattered all over the ground.

Frogs

Cute little frogs really pull in the snakes, so although they don't directly attack you they certainly attract their fair share of trouble underfoot.



tree frog



carpet snake

Snakes

The snakes can catch you unawares sometimes. They get into the patch looking for all those juicy frogs, hoppers, birds and other snake prey, so you can accidentally stand on a Death Adder while quietly doing your own thing. Death Adders wiggle their tail to attract birds, and they don't move until the bird actually touches them, then – wham! – they strike, up to eight times a second. So, as you walk around always look where you are going! They're not quite as bad as Funnel Web Spiders, but in the end, you are just as dead.

Pigs

The pigs are the most destructive animal. Pigs root up the soil to get to the moisture under the plants; they go looking for the bugs in the soil, and they are so strong that they pull everything down. Once downed, the plants are eaten for good measure! Those pigs are aggressive too; if you disturb them there is actually a good chance they will turn on you. The only solution is to lay dog traps or use the trusty 12-gauge. Shotguns are not discreet

however, and the gun sound echoes over a wide area, which can bring unwanted attention.

Pig Hunters

Known as 'piggers', these tough fellows are pulling in good money for wild pig. They send them off to Germany, as there is no more wild boar there and our pigs are boar descendants. If you leave the area for a while, quite often you can find that the piggers have been illegally hunting on the property. You see them at night with their spotlights on, and driving wildly all over the place, shots occasionally ringing out; they are a rough lot – death is a way of life for them, and they don't think twice about it.

Goats

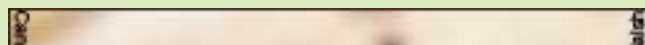
Where there are pigs, there are goats. These buggers are not nearly as aggressive as the pigs, but just as destructive. They want the soft shoots at the top of the plants, so they trample them down. To stop the goats you must put up a heavy-duty fence, or stake a dead dog to the bush nearby. Both have problems, but I have found the dog solution works better. However, you've got to check that the pigs haven't eaten the bloody dog.



a dead wild boar

Professional Pot Hunters

Come April every year, heaps of guys hit the forest trails looking for patches to rob. These guys are there for one thing and that is your pot. They are always armed, and they shoot. The best way to avoid these guys is to not leave tracks. This problem can be minimized using proper stealth and security. Rippers are lazy and are only looking for a quick buck, so do your job properly and you will have nothing to worry about. Never grow within a kilometre of any road; always walk a different route; never mark trees; and at all times be quiet.



Funnel Web Spiders



funnel web spider

Funnel web spiders are not really a threat to the crop, but if they bite you, they can certainly threaten your wellbeing – I guess it takes around 40 minutes, and you end up stone cold dead! Considering that the walk to the nearest road on a good day can take an hour, and the drive to the nearest hospital is 3 hours, you really want to keep these little critters away. Funnel Web Spiders like living in the roots of the plants, so you have to be careful when pulling those males out.

Police Helicopters

These guys are by far the biggest pests to come from the air, and when they land they take the whole lot! Fortunately they can be a little predictable. They are a bit lazy which is good for the rest of us. They stick to the spots where they have made a kill before, so **DO NOT GROW IN AREAS WHERE POT IS KNOWN TO BE GROWN**. Get as far away from the traditional places as possible, don't look like a pot grower, get a story, and look the part.

Walking

At first it seems all ok, but as time goes by, you begin to realize that if you actually slip over and twist your ankle, or put your back out, then you are in very serious trouble, especially if you have a 40kg bag of fertilizer on your back. You soon learn to walk by watching exactly where you put your feet. You do not take stupid risks like jumping onto rocks or over logs and you never, **EVER** run in the bush.

Grasshoppers

These bastards have the most appropriate name of all the pests. They hop from plant to plant nipping the tips, very effectively stunting growth. In turn, hoppers attract the birds that feed on them. Little birds are ok; but the hoppers can get quite big, so the larger birds like the currawongs



and magpies attack, breaking the delicate plant tips even more.

grasshopper



termites

Termites

Termites are the hidden fucker; they will creep into the plants and tunnel right up through the stalk. Pot is such a quick growing plant you never know that it is infested until it is too late. Telltale signs of termites are a yellowing of the leaves when all the rest of the crop is fine, or plants will suddenly become wilted. Often the first sign is that a plant is laying on the ground when a breeze knocks it over, and you notice it was holding on just by one little root.

You can lay insecticide to kill the little buggers, but it tends to kill the beneficial insects funnel web spider too. When sweating in the very hot sun every day, and breathing heavily, I don't trust the chemicals on my skin or in

my lungs. Also, I'm not really a sentimental person, but there are a variety of endangered species in this area, and if they feed on insect sites laced with chemicals, they too will perish. I am not a big fan of using chemicals on the plants, so I just let them be. At the end of the day it is just a few out of the lot, but combined they can add up!

Storms and Trees

I have had some of my scariest experiences during the summer storms. The humidity is 90% for days on end. The heat is 35-40 degrees Celsius (over 100 degrees F) for weeks on end. Then the storms roll in. If it is a bad storm there will be hail. That's fortunately only once or twice a season, but what you will get are really strong winds, which drop trees and branches everywhere. Then you get the lightning; that is scary, and virtually every tree has lightning scars. Often you find bits of wood that have exploded from the trees after a lightning strike!



a storm approaches



caterpillar

Caterpillars

A mate of mine explained how one day he was in his patch with his girlfriend, when this big group of butterflies flew about them. She said, "Oh look at the beautiful butterflies!" He told me that that was the end of the patch as far as he was concerned. She didn't understand until three weeks later, when they found dozens of the colas dead; the "beautiful" butterflies had been caterpillars, and ringbarked the buds, killing them!

Mold

When the wet weather sets in the mold will appear; if there has been an attack of the caterpillars you will find a large amount of mold in the buds. It appears where they have eaten and killed the bud. It also appears where they have shat, since manure is the perfect place for the mold to grow on. Once it starts to spread in the wet weather it can rapidly consume the whole bud!



mold

NEXT ISSUE

There is a lot more to growing a patch than meets the eye. In the next issue of *Cannabis Culture Magazine* I will get into the politics of partners, and how there's always an issue that wants to stuff up the operation, even when it's going well. Finding profit in agriculture is difficult, and particularly so when you are growing cannabis.



Email this article to

send

[CC Home](#) - [Sitemap](#) - [About CC](#) - [Current Issue](#) - [Backissues](#) - [Subscribe](#) - [Outlet Locator](#) - [Forums](#) - [Pot-TV](#) - [Newsfeeds](#) - [Bud Photos](#) - [Shop CC](#) - [Grow Store](#) - [Advertise](#) - [Advertisers](#) - [Classifieds](#) - [Tokers' Bowl](#) - [Contact Us](#)

CANNABIS CULTURE MAGAZINE

www.cannabisculture.com

**307 West Hastings Street Vancouver BC
V6B 1H6 Canada**