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by Dana Larsen (01 Aug, 1999)

An Aussie grower shares secret techniques, and reveals a strange new strain of pot!



photo: Dana Larsen

Images show Australian Bastard Cannabis in all its glory...

After the Nimbin Mardi Grass festival ended I made my goodbyes with Dennis and the Aussie gang. But instead of going straight home I stopped in Sydney, where I was greeted by my friend Mr Ayers. He and his charming wife drove me to his farmland hours from the city, where he showed me his secret Australian grow techniques, regaled me with stories of tricking cops and outsmarting thieves, and introduced me to a unique variety of cannabis that the world has never seen before.

Blackberry growing

Ayers grows a few small patches on his own acreage and is experimenting with indoor systems, but the bulk of his plants are grown outdoors, well hidden in blackberry bushes on the property of other farmers. He shuns public parks as being too popular with other growers, and too carefully examined by police.

Ayers' techniques are simple, but his execution shows that he has had many years of practical experience. He

has spent many days scouring the countryside of the region in which he lives. Most of his outdoor grow sites ranged between 1 and 3 hours drive from his home. He explained to me how sometimes he would follow a river for miles, with a fishing rod and tackle with him as cover. Other times he would go onto large properties that were for sale and ask if he could look around, taking the opportunity to check the grounds for potential grow sites.

Ayers was looking for large patches of blackberry bushes. Ayers would examine a prospective patch from all angles, circling it and trying to find if there was a section hidden from casual and accidental viewers, which was surrounded by bramble thick enough that a 15' clearing could pass unobserved.

Most of the grow sites he revealed to me were entered by crawling along my belly for 10 to 20 feet through a narrow tunnel under clinging, thorny blackberry vines. These tunnels were so well hidden that more than once Ayers had to back out of a passage which he thought was his tunnel but turned out otherwise.

Yet amazingly, one narrow tunnel would emerge into a previously invisible 15 foot clearing, with a one foot high wire fence forming the perimeter. The circle area would be cleared of brambles, and at its peak would have a few hundred plants, yielding 10 to 12 pounds of decent bud.

Ayers would plant either cuttings or seedlings, making a small coded map for later reference if he planted more than one variety at the same location.

Simple techniques

Ayers' preferred outdoor technique was not to condition the soil very much. He would normally break up the soil and dig a pit, then mix a small handful of "water jel" in with the soil. This jel absorbs water to an astonishing degree, with a teaspoon capable of turning a glass of water into a solid gel within a few minutes. By mixing it into the soil, Ayers ensures that there will always be moisture available to the plant. The jel will absorb rainwater and hold it for the plant until needed.



Ayers told me that when he first tried the jel he used far too much, and that when it rained his plants were lifted right out of the ground by the expanding action of the gel. He uses only very small quantities now and praises the utility of the product.

Sometimes Ayers would bring his own soil to a site, but he had found that soil was far too heavy and obvious to be carting around. He prefers using loose rockwool if he needs a growing medium. It is very light to carry and can be disguised or hidden more easily than soil.

He would circle each plant with a handful each of bone and blood meal, letting it absorb into the soil with the rain and waterings, presumably giving the plant a steady source of nutrients.



Note the unusual shape...



...of the leaves and the...

Australian Bastard Cannabis

The main attraction in visiting Ayers was not his imaginative grow techniques nor his tales of outwitting cops. Instead, it was to examine and record data on a new strain of cannabis, never before seen by CC staff, or any of the researchers we've contacted.

We've dubbed this peculiar strain Australian Bastard Cannabis (ABC), and although it's definitely pot, it sure doesn't look like it. The ABC has a different leaf structure than regular pot, and its general growth pattern is more like a shrub than the stately cannabis we're used to.

The ABC had first come to Ayers' attention when he read about someone being busted for growing it in Northern Australia. It was described in the media as a "dangerous new strain" which had been stopped from spreading in

the nick of time. Ayers saw mention of it a few years later in a "dirty magazine", but it had been stolen from him, along with many other personal pot books, in a nasty incident a few months before my visit.

The plant itself had come into his possession through an acquaintance who had gotten it from a friend of a friend. Ayers talked his way into a few cuttings and some seeds, and now has a few thriving patches.

I smoked some of the cured buds from the ABC, and although it's clearly pot it's not a very potent smoke. Yet there is hope, as I screened some dried buds to extract the trichomes, and when I was done the resulting ABC hash was a nice smoke with more kick than the bud. Ideally, proper breeding and crossing with more potent strains should produce plants which combine potency with the unique look of the ABC.

CC has acquired hundreds of ABC seeds, and they are now in the hands of dozens of seed breeders and growers across North America. Within a few months the first ABC crosses will be available, and hopefully within a few breeding seasons crosses will be developed which contain all the desired characteristics.

ABC traits

The Bastard Cannabis has proved itself to be a hardy, frost-resistant plant. The ABC has consistently survived frosts which have killed other plants, possibly making it suitable for growing in more Northern climates. As an experiment, Ayers has taken large cuttings with multiple leaves and branches, and they have all successfully rooted.

I speculate that the ABC is a strain of cannabis gone feral. Whether from an ancient hemp crop or the more recently abandoned patch of an outdoor grower, it has obviously had many generations of inbreeding to achieve its rarified state. Somehow it has survived over the years, until finally reaching those capable of exploring and preserving its unique genetic potential. Yet it did not exhibit any detectable hermaphroditism, which is often the result of plants forced to inbreed among themselves for survival.



The ABC grows no fan leaves. All of its leaves are short and small, and all have an unusual and irregular distribution of stamens within the leaf. The ABC looks more like pot when it's budding than when it's growing. At their peak the heads do resemble the buds of ordinary strains, but even then it is still different enough that it might go unnoticed by the casual observer. While in vegetative growth the plant looks little like regular pot, growing in a shrub-like fashion, without the traditional candelabra shape or other identifying characteristics.



...shrub-like growth pattern of the plant.

My camera equipment was not up to the task of getting detailed close-ups of the ABC's unique leaf structure. The shots I took do show the strange look of the leaves, but don't do the oddity of the plant justice.

Yet perhaps it's better that we're not printing detailed shots of this unique strain. Those who need to know exactly what it looks like will be able to acquire seeds soon enough. If we printed detailed photos then all the narcs, pigs and rippers would know what to look for, and that's not what we want.



Strange Aussie Genes

Australia seems to be a land with a number of unique genetics awaiting revelation to the outer world. While in Nimbin I heard tales of pot plants reaching an astounding 25 feet tall! I didn't witness any such monsters with my own eyes, but I did see stalks of over 8" in diameter, and heard tales of the "biggest stalk contest" which brought in massive tree trunks over a foot across.

I imagined fields of these massive trees, their thick branches covered in glistening buds. What a weedster's wonderland that would be! I also had fantasies of crossing such mighty trees with a mighty mite, perhaps creating twenty foot colas, potent poles of pot!

- Special offer! As a special offer, *Cannabis Culture* will send 10 ABC or ABC x Flo seeds to the first fifty new

subscribers who ask for them. Just write on your subscription form that you'd like some ABC with your subscription! (We'll send the seeds separately from the CC magazines.) We'll probably run out in early September (1999), so if you want some you'd better hurry!

Note that the ABC seeds seem to have a bit lower germination rate than usual. Don't be surprised if not all of these special seeds sprout.

Please experiment with these seeds, try crossing them with some more potent strains, and let us know about your results.

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