

CANNASSENTIALS COMPANY INFORMATION



Photo: Alexander Edwards

Cannassentials is a cannabis farm outside Eugene, Ore., whose proprietors are at the forefront of a movement dedicated to regenerative cultivation. Adherents to this “beyond organic” method strive to revitalize unhealthy soils in harmony with nature to create an “upward spiral” of sustainability. It’s an intrinsically noble endeavor, but Cannassentials is in it for the quality.

Their product is, in fact, highly prized by connoisseurs, the cannabis cognoscenti whose palates are sufficiently sophisticated to discern the nuances of such high-end merchandise. Distinguished by a handmade, artisanal approach, Cannassentials’ brand of husbandry demands an uncommon level of thought, care and energy, which lends its gourmet ganja considerable prestige.

It’s not surprising, then, that Master Grower Shane Budd (who prefers the title “farmer”), Master Grower William Sandberg and CFO Myron Chadowitz (Budd’s cousin) disdain the mechanized processing, profit-at-all-costs mentality and unethical trappings of factory farming. They’ve even been known to thumb their noses at the factory farmer’s very reason for being: productivity.

Indeed, Cannassentials has pursued excellence even at the expense of yield. Budd cites a technique popular with the local pinot noir planters: “To produce the finest wine, they leave only a third of the grapes on the vine, which directs all its energy into the remaining fruit, creating more flavor compounds. We also sacrifice some of what could be yield, composting it for future use, then wait until the cannabis is ripe, ready and finished before we harvest.”

Cannassentials' crop has more in common with the world-famous pinots of the Willamette Valley than terroir; it, too, is subject to discussions of balance, complexity and structure. The comparisons tend to stop, however, when it comes to terpenes. These are the oils secreted in the flower's sticky resin gland that, in cannabis, impart not only aroma and taste but a rainbow of psychoactive effects unmatched by even the most precious pinot.

Says Budd: "We feed our plants scrupulously sourced plant-based amendments, which, unlike byproduct mixes or bottled fertilizers, are full of terpenes." Terpenes compounded by terpenes make for a prodigiously potent, pungently fragrant, wildly flavorful flower. This is where the ecological advantages of "living soil" intersect with the company's quest for consummate quality.

Cannassentials has done well by doing good. The one-acre, 700-plant outfit was honored with a first-place finish in the Best Flower Nose (Medical) category of the 2016 Oregon Dope Cup, bestowed by the tastemaking *Dope* magazine. It was likewise deemed #1 in GanjaCon's GanjaCup indoor, outdoor and greenhouse categories, the only grower to demonstrate superiority in all three designations.

Budd settled in the southernmost Willamette Valley in 1999 and began farming certified-organic produce on his 28 acres. Cannassentials grew out of that business in 2006, when Oregon adopted medical marijuana. Because the new crop was intended for patients, he felt it must burn as cleanly and smoothly as possible to prevent throat irritation (typical of chemically treated cannabis). He achieved this through trial and error, along the way becoming an authority on "closed-loop" farming.

Budd is quick to credit his fellow regenerative practitioners, pioneers like the proprietors of Dragon Earth Essentials, who shared with him their wisdom on fermented "teas" and other ancient agricultural methods. These have taken their place at Cannassentials alongside modern technical advances like climate-controlled greenhouses that allow for both supplemental lighting and the sun's UV rays (deadpans Budd, "The sun has a very good track record"). This "hybrid" environment enables roots to maintain a symbiotic relationship with the soil, as in an outdoor grow, while benefitting from the carefully calibrated interventions of an indoor grow. Computers monitor the plants' vital signs and other cultivation data.

The stewards of Cannassentials' rich land work long and hard to nurture the organisms that in turn sustain them. Says Budd: "We respect the earth as much as we do our farm family and our customers, so we feel we have no choice but to give each our all – it's a matter of integrity. By the same token, we'd never provide a product to the public we wouldn't eagerly consume ourselves. And believe me, no one has higher standards than we do."

— **Julia Rubiner, *The Herbal Verbalist***
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