

A Real Farmer Looks at “Medical Marijuana”

Bob Cannard grows mixed fruits and vegetables on a 25-acre farm in Glen Ellen. He manages it so that something is always ready to harvest. His perspective seems especially relevant as California jurisdictions restrict outdoor cultivation, and some activists beg for the right to operate in the closet.

Bob Cannard: I'd say we're growing enough to generate a minimum of 150 generous vegetable meals a day. Right now [in early May] we could pick at least 5,000 salads and 5,000 bowls of fava beans infused with various herbs. Those two crops are generous right at the moment. In a month we'll have around 80,000 pounds of potatoes. Every day between now and then there'll be some major crop that is passing through. It may be turnips that people don't like too much, but it'll be a food crop that's good for them.

Given one good worker — one man of the soil from Mexico who knows what his trade is and how to practice it energetically— we can take care of this 20 to 25 acres with its wide range of vegetables and fruits and berries and herbs and cover crops for the soil.

Monday we'll plant 5,000 tomato plants, after we pick a load of vegetables in the morning. We'll plant them, we'll get the irrigation lines out, and we'll have the water on them before 4:30, when his day finishes.

The tomatoes were started 49 to the flat in flats filled with composty soils. All the nutrition that's available on the earth is in that media and available to the plant. They're strong and will resist the stress of transplant... They're all about two inches apart. Everything they need is right in the soil and they don't have to set out these seeking roots that run to the outside and the bottom of the pot looking for stuff, and wrap around and around and around in pursuit of escape from the prison they're in.

As long as I don't let them try to get too big and force spatial competition, until that point there's no stress. They root out, they don't intertangle, the root systems are easily separable, they have finely branched, divided root systems that indicate contentment where they are.

Everything they need is there. We have more than 100 flats of them; we just crawl along and stick 'em in. And the ground is all prepared. I use tractors. I just spaded it this morning. I'll take the little tractor and mark out all the rows. I do most of the crawling and it takes Javier just about as much time to walk back to the truck and pick up a flat of plants and haul it out to me as it takes me to plant 50 of 'em. Then he'll get a little bit ahead of me in laying out the flats, and then he'll dispatch himself down to pick up another truck load. If I get done before, I sit down and have a puff (of tobacco).

What's important is the work ethic. The two of us are taking care of hundreds of thousands of plants. And they're delicate, they've got to be perfect. Those plants go to famous professional chefs who are extremely demanding. Cleanliness, size, uniformity, are all important to those guys.

O'Shaughnessy's: Most marijuana distributed through the dispensaries is grown indoors for security reasons. It commands a higher price because there's no wind damage. The little bubbles of sap are intact, the smell is strong.

Bob Cannard: The people who sell the gear make a lot of money and people who don't know very much about grow-



BOB CANNARD AT HIS FARM IN GLEN ELLEN, CALIFORNIA.

ing plants go to stores that offer advice, and it's recommended that they do this. They make a tremendous investment, which a normal agricultural crop would not justify, and they're sold a bill of goods...

If they're growing legal medical marijuana, they should do it outdoors. It should be medicinal grade. All foods are drugs. And as with any food, in order for the mother plant to put its true fullness and essence into its consuming part — whether it's a broccoli or a bud is immaterial — in order for it to truly be mild, clear, sweet-flavored, truly nourishing broccoli, one that has all of its refined compounds together, the mother plant's got to have everything it needs.

If the mother plant has deficiencies, those deficiencies are passed on to the consuming body part. If the mother plant has internalized hunger and discontentment, it passes that incomplete energy on.

If you're going to be dealing with a medicinal marijuana plant, it's absolutely critical that the plant is totally filled unto itself and that it's not forced into high yield. You can grow a plant and force it and do anything you want with it, because it's immobile and you're in charge. But if you want to grow a truly pain-killing, a truly inspiring, a truly mind-opening plant, then you've got to have a plant that's growing towards completeness.

Volumetric yield is a secondary

consideration. Pumping the plant to great imbalance with large quantities of nitrogen increases the chance of getting spider mites on it. Maybe having a fungal attack on the flowering portion and subsequent rot. Maybe having a soft-bodied finished product that tends to decay and is difficult to dry. Maybe having an aroma that is unpleasant, from nitrite-bonded elements that are actually toxic upon consumption.

This is not the intent, the spirit, the soul of that plant. That plant is a medicine and its spirit has got to be recognized and nurtured. If you go in the direction of a naturally supported plant — supported in terms of nutrition — it will have a complete immunological system, there will be no mites, there will be no mildews, there will be no critters attacking it. It has everything it needs to build its own immune system, and if it builds it to completeness, nothing can attack it successfully.

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Marijuana is a full-sun plant. You cannot grow any plant to completeness under artificial light. Those light bulbs generate about 3 percent of the band of cosmic rays that come to our planet. The organisms have evolved under full

sun. You can't grow a broccoli under artificial light. It's completely bogus. It's just something to sell the gear, to sell power, it's a scam. Certainly you can force the plant to do anything you want. I can force you to do anything I want — all I have to do is cage you up and withhold food and subjugate you with threat of torture to your partner, and you'll do anything I want. But I can't force completeness and happiness on you or my plants. I can only get there through a process of generosity and actually understanding the plant.

And if you do it like that, if you truly study and read the plant and understand the plant for its health characteristics, then you have obviated about 80 percent of the work. You have no bugs that are pests. If you see bugs rising to pest level, you know there's a deficiency in your system and instead of going with adversarial energy and killing the bugs and getting into this negative upon negative, you observe its health, you feed the plant appropriately, and as the plant gets what it needs, the bug population diminishes and the plants straightens itself.

Why we have any element of agriculture that is not directed to produce plants along these lines is purely for economic reasons — the people wishing to control and sell inputs. Today, because we've bought into the line in general agriculture, the only people who make money are the people who sell the inputs.

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The farmer is purely a serf who goes through the actions and lives the illusion of independence. And the bankers skim and dictate in collusion with the material suppliers. You use that commercial fertilizer, you guarantee that you're going to have bug infestations, because you're throwing the plant off balance. Commercial agricultural nitrogen is very similar to methamphetamine in terms of what it does to the organism: it speeds it up, and then it crashes.

It also gets the system of soils and genetic material selection addicted to the drug. We've been dumbed down and reduced to the point where we'll buy a bogus bill of goods. We have hollow plants that today have less than ten percent — or less — of the mineral content they had a hundred years ago. So we don't get the organically bonded mineral nutrients, and then our system collapses and then we get sick and get cancers and they try to shove petro-drugs down our throats. Or we consume medical marijuana in an attempt to raise our spirits and deal with the problem — but it's grown in the same fashion, with sickness and weakness and incompleteness. A plant carrying a toxic load is not the one you want to raise your spirits.

O'Shaughnessy's: Almost all the marijuana being sold for medical use is grown hydroponically from clones. What's your line on that?

Bob Cannard: Years ago, when I used to smoke marijuana, I wouldn't smoke any that didn't have some seeds in it. If you don't find a couple of seeds, it means the plant has been neutered. It's been short-changed. It didn't get to do its deal. To manage and reduce genetic reproduction, I can go along with that; but to eliminate it completely... No. You've got to allow a plant to have a few seeds. How can it be a truly content plant

without sexual fulfillment?

Hydroponic anything... Hydroponic tomatoes: why didn't they grab the marketplace? Because they're crap and they taste like crap. The full-control agricultural material salesmen tried to stuff hydroponics down our throats. They found many a sucker, and the banks loaned 'em money to build hydroponic facilities. Then they had high-cost inputs and many unforeseen problems, and then the finished product was rejected by the clients, and they washed out. There's a few little niche-y places that didn't go bankrupt, but to grow a damned weed like marijuana for medical purposes under pain of confinement is ridiculous.

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It should be grown outdoors, in full-sun, with the involvement of the people who are going to use it as medicine. Those who are physically capable need to get out there and harvest their own stuff and have a true connection with nature.

If I wanted to do that I would contract with the sick people and charge \$10 a plant. Let's say you're allowed to grow three plants per person. If somebody sent me ten dollars that would capitalize me to be able to grow the plant, and when harvest time came they would get notification and they could bring \$20 and come up and harvest their three plants.

A field-grown marijuana plant with a yield of a half pound — a nice well grown naturally grown, high-energy, sweet, complete plant is going to take up five square feet. Let's say it's going to take up 4.32 square feet and we can have 10 thousand of them on an acre, and I'm going to get \$10 each for them. That's \$100,000 an acre! Oh, my God! I grow an acre of broccoli, I'm lucky to get 50 cents per plant. Ten dollars?

If you grow an acre of broccoli, you're lucky to gross \$3,000. And I can make a living growing broccoli. Why should I make more than double the profit growing medical marijuana? It's absurd.

Sick people don't have economic security. Maybe they can't work, maybe they get government support to pay their rent, maybe they're in the process of exhausting savings, maybe they're depending on healthy family members... to siphon off their money is absurd. We're looking at a half-pound per plant, ten dollars a plant. If I were wanting to grow that crop, I would become inordinately rich compared to a common vegetable farmer. But what I'm interested in doing is growing complete full-bodied food that has the capacity to really nourish the person so that they don't get sick in the first place. That's what I'm doing.

Hydroponics? Ridiculous! Any phony, commercial growing process is absurd. What you need to grow good quality plants is good mineral nutrition, good digestion in the soil, and the appropriate cosmic wavelength that we call sunlight, and a good quotient of old air in the soil to feed the digestion, which is compost, and a good clean air environment so that

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the plants can absorb non-polluted air to build on and function.

I use rock dust and oyster shell and rock phosphates and crushed rock. I couldn't grow a garden without mineral supplementation. Every enzymatic process is built around a mineral element — a single element or a mineral compound. And enzymatic processes control all life. So, delete minerals, you got problems. Listen to the land-grant colleges and feed plants that old commercial NPK [nitrogen-phosphorous-potassium] stuff and you're guaranteed to have imbalances.

You can't force something to grow to completeness. You can only nurture it to grow to completeness. And it's so easy to do it right. And it's so hard to do it wrong!



BOB CANNARD

Costs of Prohibition Calculated (Don't Bogart that Taxable Commodity)

How long can government refrain from taxing instead of prohibiting the marijuana industry? There would be annual savings of \$7.7 billion and tax revenues of \$6.2 billion if marijuana were legalized in the U.S., according to a recent report by Jeffrey Miron, a Visiting Professor of Economics at Harvard.

Underwritten by the Marijuana Policy Project, the report projects savings of \$5.3 billion now spent by state and local governments — police arresting, courts prosecuting, and jails and prisons incarcerating people for selling marijuana. The federal government would save \$2.4 billion by calling off its marijuana interdiction efforts, according to Miron.

In estimating potential tax revenue, Miron uses the Drug Czar's figure of \$10.5 billion spent by U.S. residents on marijuana in 2000. His assumption that legalization would not increase demand probably "biases the estimated tax revenue downward," he notes.

He foresees two offsetting effects on supply. On the one hand, production might rise because "marijuana suppliers in a legal market would not incur the costs imposed by prohibition, such as the threat of arrest, incarceration, fines, asset seizure, and the like... On the other hand,

marijuana suppliers in a legal market would bear the costs of tax and regulatory policies that apply to legal goods but that black market suppliers normally avoid."

The report considers a range of taxing options, from treating marijuana like an ordinary commodity (which would generate \$2.4 billion annually) to a high "sin tax" equivalent to 80% of the price (would raise \$9.5 billion). Miron settles on a rate akin to the tax on alcohol and tobacco that would raise the price 50% and produce revenue of \$6.2 billion per year. One of the tables shows how much each state stands to generate.

The Miron report can be viewed at <http://www.prohibitioncosts.org/miron-report.html>.

Its release by MPP June 2, along with its endorsement by 500 economists, resulted in a small spate of articles and op-eds. Milton Friedman reiterated his principled position: "\$7.7 billion is a lot of money, but that is one of the lesser evils. Our failure to successfully enforce these laws is responsible for the deaths of thousands of people in Colombia. I haven't even included the harm to young people. It's absolutely disgraceful to think of picking up a 22-year-old for



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smoking pot. More disgraceful is the denial of marijuana for medical purposes."

On the *Forbes* website, Quentin Hardy extrapolated from a couple of sentences in Miron's report to the possible impact of legalization on the private sector.

"If the laws change, large beneficiaries might include large agricultural groups like Archer Daniels Midland and ConAgra Foods as potential growers or distributors and liquor businesses like Constellation Brands and Allied Domecq, which understand the distribution of intoxicants. Surprisingly, Home Depot and other home gardening centers would not particularly benefit, according to the report, which projects that few people would grow their own marijuana, the same way few people distill whiskey at home."



PAT HUMPHREY (third from left), Mike Ommaha of Farmacy, medical student Sunil Aggarwal, and Mahmoud ElSohly, America's only legal marijuana grower under federal law, at the '05 ICRC meeting. Humphrey audited the talks, which he called "validation of all we've been doing." A strapping buccaneer, he was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in early July and died within three months. Beloved brother, son, father, friend, caregiver, Pat will be missed by many, many people. —F.G.

"In another widespread African story, apes can talk, but prudently refuse to do so because talking apes, their intelligence made manifest, will be put to work by humans."

—Carl Sagan and Ann Druyan, *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*