

Veteran Cultivators Favor Seeds Over Clones in Cannabis Growth

As the cannabis industry continues to evolve, veteran cultivators are experiencing a renewed interest in seeds, moving away from the reliance on clones. This shift is not just a trend but a reflection of deeper changes within the industry, influenced by personal passion and practical considerations.

A Cultural Exchange of Cannabis Genetics

Mario Guzman, renowned for creating the iconic cannabis genetics Gelato and Sunset Sherbert, eagerly anticipates his trips to Europe. For Guzman, these visits are more than just professional engagements; they are opportunities to connect with longtime friends and exchange cannabis seeds.

“All of our global friends come, and we share genetics and talk about what we’re all planting for the following year,” Guzman shared with MJBizDaily during a recent phone call. He likens this exchange to the storied seed markets of Amsterdam, where a rich culture of cannabis seed sharing has thrived for decades. Amsterdam’s coffee shops, once central to the seed trade, have historically been the backbone of cannabis culture in Europe, laying the groundwork for today’s regulated markets in the U.S.

Guzman highlights the legacy of European growers who, before the U.S. medical marijuana market took off, introduced seeds from outside the United States. These seeds became foundational to the industry’s development, reflecting a blend of tradition and innovation.

The Enthusiasm for Seeds

Despite the prevalence of cloning in regulated cannabis cultivation—driven by a demand for product uniformity—there remains a significant enthusiasm for seeds among experienced growers. Justin Sheffield, Director of Cultivation at BeLeaf Medical Co. in Missouri, illustrates this passion.

“I still get excited when I pop a three-pack of seeds as opposed to a clone,” Sheffield said. He emphasizes the unique thrill of cultivating something new and proprietary, which adds a layer of excitement to the cultivation process. BeLeaf Medical Co., operating three facilities in Missouri, constantly engages in “pheno hunts” to discover and develop new strains from seeds.

Seeds vs. Clones: Weighing the Benefits

The decision to favor seeds over clones often comes down to practical considerations. Reggie Harris, co-founder of House of Kush in Kansas City, Missouri, notes that many clients are looking for hardy plants that are easier to grow.

“Seeds have become more popular in recent years as companies have become more concerned with disease and pests,” Harris explained. In the regulated U.S. cannabis market, valued at \$112 billion, seeds offer a

solution to the issues associated with clones, such as disease vulnerability and pest problems. While clones can save time by eliminating the need for pheno hunting, the potential risks and rewards associated with seeds make them a viable alternative.

Harris emphasizes that flower quality, including appearance and aroma, remains crucial to retaining consumer loyalty. “With the number of choices out there, cultivators are looking for hits. If you can consistently deliver them, they’ll keep coming back for your genetics.”

International Perspectives on Cannabis Genetics

When considering cannabis seeds, Eugene Boukreev, Chief Marketing Officer at Barcelona-based seed bank Fast Buds, suggests that cultivators should look for detailed information about genetic stability and quality. He also recommends verifying germination rates and seeking reviews or testimonials from other growers.

Boukreev points out that North American and European growers have different priorities. “North American growers favor genetics with high THC content for more potent flower, optimized yield, and unique terpene profiles for market differentiation,” he said. In contrast, European growers must comply with stringent THC limits and regulations, leading to higher demand for low-THC strains and those with specific medicinal properties.

A Collaborative Showcase

The upcoming MJBizCon in Las Vegas, scheduled for December 3-6, will feature The Vault, a collaborative effort by Voice of the Plant (VOP) to bring together top cannabis genetics from Europe and the U.S.

Guzman and VOP’s Deych are excited about showcasing their genetic libraries and fostering an environment of open sharing. “Everyone involved in The Vault, we’re going to open up the best of our genetic libraries to the world,” Guzman said. This initiative aims to replicate the seed-sharing culture of Europe on U.S. soil, offering a platform for geneticists and enthusiasts to exchange and explore new cannabis strains.

The Vault will include notable representatives from various organizations, such as Abstrax Terpenes of Irvine, California, Barney’s Farm of Amsterdam, Conception Nurseries of Sacramento, California, and Sensi Seeds of Amsterdam. Guzman believes that recognizing the importance of genetics is crucial for the industry’s growth and success.

“A lot of the big grows and businesses have started to understand the importance of genetics and how that root truly is the center of the business,” Guzman said.

As the cannabis industry continues to grow and evolve, the renewed focus on seeds reflects a deeper appreciation for genetic diversity and innovation. Veteran cultivators, driven by both passion and practical considerations, are at the forefront of this shift, embracing the rich tradition of seed-sharing while shaping the future of cannabis cultivation.

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