



Photo: Etienne Lovejoy

is sent from our attorney to the local heads of law enforcement and no further inspections have been requested.

WHY ORGANIC FARMING?

The cannabis produced on our Red Bluff farm has always been grown in accordance with California's Organic Food Standards. As the master gardener, it has been my pleasure to teach the other patients how to use fertilizers and plant teas, which are completely organic, and grow the most exquisite medicinal cannabis to complete perfection. Pesticides and other chemical agents leave residues that are dangerous, especially to people with weakened immune systems. It's so important to have complete control over the entire process—to prevent molds and overripening, and to make sure the medicine dries properly and is correctly cured for 10 to 30 days.

Some of our more interesting features are the worm colony and the reptile-alter. We raise our own worms and generate "tea" that is rich in castings to feed our plants. A concrete home was built to house lizards, toads and the occasional snakes. Grasshoppers and gophers beware! We've defeated spider mites with natural predators, killed powder molds with beneficial rooting agents and held back scores of ravenous caterpillars with natural biological agents. Basically, if it isn't natural, you won't find it in our garden.

THE TRIALS OF CERTIFICATION

A few years ago, during our fourth year of operation, we decided to register or certify as organic, since we met all the guidelines to qualify. Our county Department of Agriculture was going to assist us in registering, until a local police officer intervened. He convinced the



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Department that if we were to register our garden as Organic, we would be admitting to possession for sales and they would be guilty of aiding and abetting. His logic was to infer that because such registration is only required for commercial operations, any family farmers that applied must therefore be commercial in nature. We then tried to get private certification, but they wouldn't do it either because they thought the Feds would target them if they dared to certify cannabis as organic. And who knows...maybe they were right.

BENEFITS OF DIRECT ACCESS

Because we operate as a true collective, we are able to share the costs associated with cultivating and processing our cannabis, allowing our money to go much farther than it would if we were to buy our medicine instead. By providing each other with the resources and support needed to produce medical-grade cannabis, we are operating under a model of Direct Access, as the voters of California intended it. Indeed, operations such as ours are specifically protected under California's Compassionate Use Act (Prop. 215 and SB 420).

This year we grew 24 plants, for 16 patients. Because having different strains is important for meeting patients' various medical needs, we grew 15 strains: Jazz Train/Indica, G-14, G-15, Old Blood Indica/Purple Haze, Ship Wreck, Sergeant Major Purple, Bubba Gump, Sugar Bear, Purple Indica, Cryptonite, Silver Indica, Silver Ship, Silver Streak and a couple mystery strains named B and E. We have produced enough medicine for the year and lots of good cheer.

Our annual costs are around \$36,000. This includes supplies and materials, security updates, staffing and remuneration, attorney retainer fees, extra food, bail money and insurance. We set aside sixteen pounds for free, as the initial disbursement off the top (one pound each). This is equivalent to a donation worth \$25,600 at production costs. The remainder is disbursed according to the amount of time and/or monies invested into the garden throughout the crop cycle. Patients earn \$20/hour for labor and receive equal returns (rounded up) for investments. According to California laws, our garden is legally able to produce up to 38 pounds of buds for our immediate collective needs. This breaks down to costing around \$100/ounce to produce. The benefits of Direct Access are self-evident—there is no middleman therefore access is safe, affordable and consistent. Also, strains are known and everyone learns more about growing their own. Any additional medicine is stored by the patients for their future needs. All trim/leaf is divided up equally, for making baked goods and concentrates. Everything is divided as it is finished curing, so there's no weight to worry about. As Ben Franklin suggested, we hang together, rather than apart. Strength in numbers. Power to truth.

STATE OF THE COMPASSIONATE USE LAWS IN CALIFORNIA

Many positive developments have ensued since the passage of Proposition 215.

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