

Cannabis legalization and how to grow your own at home

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VERONICA APPIA

vappia@metroland.com

With cannabis legalization slated for later in 2018, Canadian residents will have the option of growing up to four plants per residence.

When that time comes, those interested are going to have quite a few steps to consider, but Shayne MacDonald, owner of The Altered Native in Orangeville, says the main factor is not to overthink things. There are plenty of options and methods to personalize your plants, but don't get too caught up on it all, he says.

Here's what you need to know about growing your own plants at home:

What's the deal with indoor and outdoor growing?

"There's a difference between indoor and outdoor growing," says The Altered Native's Melissa Ciraco. "With outdoor, you have the benefit of Mother Nature, who's going to do a lot of the work for you. So you're not worried about your temperature, your humidity or different things like that."

But with indoor growing, people have the benefit of simulating ideal conditions, she says.

"When you have it indoors you can manipulate the growth of it differently than outside. So if you want a small plant, you can switch its vegetative state and its flowering state sooner than it happens in nature. You stress the plant or you change the light cycle," she adds.

How to germinate the seed

The first step in growing your own plant, MacDonald says, is being able to germinate the seed. For this, growers must be cognizant of the water being used. Town water that is chlorinated should work well for this purpose, but if the water comes from a water softener, it should not be used, as the salt content has the potential to kill the seed.

Once you have the proper water in a glass, drop your seeds into it and keep them in a cool, dark place. MacDonald recommends the area atop your refrigerator, way at the back, as low vibration helps germinate the seed.

Once a seed has opened up, place it about one inch deep into a

pot of soil, with the stem facing down, MacDonald says. Then, cover the seed with soil, and water it with a thin-spouted watering can, about two inches from the seed, all the way around for three or four times.

What to know about temperature and humidity

When growing indoors, Ciraco says, the ideal temperature should be between 23 C and 27 C with the lights on, and 18 C with the lights off. The ideal amount of humidity is between 40 and 60 per cent.

"If it's under 40 per cent humidity, the plant thinks it's in a drought - it doesn't matter how much water is around its roots and its base, it's sensing that from its leaves," Ciraco says. "If it's over 60 per cent, then the plant can't push water out."

How to choose your nutrients
There is a difference between food and supplements, Ciraco explains. Food is a standalone prod-

uct that often comes in two parts: one for the growth stage and one for the bloom stage. There is a wide selection of plant foods available, with differing levels of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium. This allows growers to grow different types of cannabis plants.

Then, as an extra element, growers can choose to add supplements to aid with factors such as root health or the growth of bigger, denser flowers.

In order for food to properly be absorbed by your plant, Ciraco advises, the soil should have a pH level of about 6.3.

When to harvest your plant
"I think the most complicated thing about growing is getting to the end of the season and figuring out what the right time is to harvest the plant, what they are looking for and how they properly dry it and cure it," MacDonald says.

Looking at trichome ripeness

can help indicate when a plant is ready, he adds. Trichomes are tiny crystals found on the cannabis leaves, and they indicate the kind of high you will get from your plant.

If your trichomes are clear, the end product will give you a heady kind of high, but if they are milky and still slightly transparent, the THC is at its best state, MacDon-

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By Cory Soal
R.H.A.D.

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