

Growing Marijuana - THC marijuana potency.

Variations in marijuana potency

The potency of a particular marijuana sample will vary because of many factors other than the variety. Many of these have to do with the natural development of the plants and their resin glands. Environmental factors do affect potency but there are large differences in any variety. These inherent factors must be explained before we can talk of factors outside the plant that affect relative potency.

Variations in Marijuana Potency Within Varieties of Marijuana

There are noticeable differences in THC concentrations between plants of the same variety. Differences are large enough so that you can tell (by smoking) that certain plants are better. This is no news to homegrowers, who often find a particular plant to be outstanding. Five-fold differences in THC concentration have also shown up in research. However, when you consider a whole group of plants of the same variety, they're relatively similar in cannabinoid concentrations. Type II plants are the most variable, with individual plants much higher than other in certain cannabinoids.

Variations by Plant Part

The concentration of cannabinoids depends on the plant part, or more specifically, the concentration and development of resin glands to plant part. The female flower bracts have the highest concentration of resin glands and are usually the most potent plant parts. Seeds and roots have no resin glands. These show no more than traces of cannabinoids. Smoke seeds will give you a headache before you can get high. If you got high on seeds, then there were probably enough bracts adhering to the seeds to get you high.

On the right are the potencies, in descending order, of the various plant parts

Female flowering clusters. In practice you don't separate hundreds of tiny bracts to make a joint. The whole flowering mass (seeds removed), along with small accompanying leaves, forms the material.

Male flower clusters. These vary more in relative potency depending on the strain (see "Potency by Sex," below). Growing shoots. Before the plants flower, the vegetative shoots (tips) of the main stem and branches are the most potent plant parts.

Leaves (a) that accompany flowers (small); (b) along branches (medium); (c) along main stem (large). Generally, the smaller the leaf is, the more potent it can be.

Petioles (leaf stalks). Same order as leaves.

Stems. Same order as leaves. The smaller the stem (twig), the higher the possible concentration of cannabinoids. Stems over 1/16" in diameter contain only traces of cannabinoids and are not worth smoking. The small stems that bear the flowers can be quite potent.

Seeds and Roots. Contain only traces (less than .01 percent) and are not worth smoking or extracting.