

Shantibaba's
GROW tips



THE **GOOD** **THE** **BAD**
AND THE **UGLY**



SYMPTOMS OF AN UNREGULATED SEED AND MEDICAL
BUSINESS, THAT OFFICIALLY DOES NOT EVEN EXIST.



If Government fails to draw guidelines to follow, we tend to do it ourselves, and in industries that are border-lining the legal and illegal it is difficult to make a law that reads logically. Those who draw up a set of rules and regulations to follow and pay for will always be one step ahead of those who deny existence of things that are not meant to exist, but do.

It is hard to blame organizations taking the step to regulate things that are impossible for the governments to act on due to their stance in society or the religious ideas that constitute the actions of people in that particular society. However it is difficult to let people get blatantly ripped off by rogue traders without acting on it also. So in this article we will review how the seed companies rose from the ashes in the late 80s and 90s until they propagated into noxious weeds without anyone knowing how to select good from bad. It has always been a grey area and until it changes to either black or white, nothing will really change nor will there be mutual trust from both sides.

Seed companies began in Holland in the 80's and blossomed in that time and the early 90s based on good old fashioned selective breeding. This method was long arduous but with science on its side. Genetic diversity began to increase with stability and consistency. One could buy seeds from The Seed Bank and be assured of a genetic close to the description and with a genotype that was based from its origins. An Afghan crossed to a Thai was stabilized over a two year period with a lot of testing of different generations and then put out to the public market at a fair price for a fair amount of seeds. These F1 sold seeds went on to all the corners of the world and became the selected mothers of strains that grew in popularity in local areas. Names changed and other strains were introduced to those already being used as clone mothers and slowly the varietals (plant strains that are slightly different from each other) began to increase in numbers and diversity. Individual choices molded new sub strains. The process took time and things had legitimacy and authentic genetic origins with breeders knowing these origins to be sure.

The 90s saw a big explosion and larger growing movement in many countries that prior to seed company's existence only had hash cultures. This was in part due to a lack of sophistication in cannabis agriculture. Hash production took all plants big or small and represented a good average of all the crop in a resin form. So it was a good platform for growers of cannabis to use all plants no matter if they were good or bad. As the cannabis plant developed into specific individual plants like Skunk or Northern lights or Haze, the green revolution made those who did not like the hash culture stand up and show to the world that each plant that is selected for certain reasons was worthy of being grown locally and began to curb some of the demand for hashish ...as the cannabis increased in potency and taste and yields. The 90s was the golden age for cannabis of the modern day as it was the turning point in the education of cultivation. We implemented the technology and advancements in other fields of the agricultural world. We learnt to keep cannabis alive consistently and how to clone and how to breed properly.





Cannabis seed companies were mainly found in Holland in the 80s and 90s but with the green revolution and the growing phenomena of cannabis as distinct from hashish, countries with the perfect climates to cultivate grapes and olives began increasing their hand to cannabis. Pockets of fanatical breeders gained reputation with certain selected plants and these grew into legends since this field was still very much illegal in most places in the world. Canada, USA, Australia, and Spain began growing some excellent strains and Holland seemed to be the place where most of those sub-cultured breeders and unknown growers congregated. Coffee shops in the early 90s in Holland were more like open forums of discussion on how to achieve different things with cannabis breeding and growing. Knowledge multiplied and became accessible to a wider audience than ever before and the golden age of cloning and breeding flourished with good reason and good products.

The early 90s in Holland was probably like Paris in the time of the *Existentialist movement (1950s) or The Beat Generation...underground figures emerging into public cafes to debate compare and advance. Companies were still few and most of them had their niche markets and followers. I was living in Amsterdam with the likes of Rob Clarke, Eddy from the flying Dutchmen, Ben Dronkers, Neville Schoenmakers (The Seed Bank and Sensi Seed), David Watson, Soma and Luke from Paradise, Simon from Serious Seed, and many others. You could go to a coffee shop like Russland or Siberia or The Kajtsuand meet like-minded people all who had moved to this haven to breed their wares and make their products available to the world. Breeding was in its pinnacle of development and we all had time and the support and technology we needed to make this into a worthy and esteemed vocation. In fact with the aid of the High Times Cannabis Cup, which took on a real voice for the unrepresented breeder until this point; the whole industry reached a hype and status unfamiliar to it previously.

I recall winning several Cannabis cups in the early 90s and with the introduction of the seed form of the widow family hybrids in the mid 90s; well it became a world watched event. Even people not from this world would call me up to congratulate or ask questions on strains. It seemed like we, the seed breeders were moving into a time of freedom never seen on the planet before. Debate, experimentation, technology all seemed to compliment the cannabis breeders like never before in the world...and the heart was Holland. Even plants deemed special and discovered in Australia or USA were brought to breeders in Holland to wave their magic over and stabilize them enough to launch new varieties in seed form, to be sold worldwide. The Golden years shinned over all who passed through or stayed long enough to sample...and the movement had certain integrity. Unstable poorly bred seed without real work fell by the wayside as they should and breeds that flourished and were worked on for several years and deemed worthy stable good products went on to reach legend status. Plants like Super Silver Haze, Widow, Critical Mass, Northern lights became the new super models of the cannabis world, winning multiple awards and putting the smiles on growers' faces worldwide. It seemed that Cannabis had shed its hippy



and anti-establishment image and was now respectable. In fact Cannabis was becoming hip and useful to many people it had never reached out to before. People with cancer and severe depression or MS were beginning to use cannabis as a last alternative to generic medicines to avoid side effects worse than the real condition and seemed satisfied with managing their pain and suffering, without disturbing any part of society. In a compassionate way, it seemed Cannabis was beginning to give a quality of life to the terminally ill never known before from any medication, especially one that was accessible to grow from a seed in your own garden in your part of the world.

With the advent of indoor grow rooms and the increased sophistication of growing techniques cannabis was fast becoming an underground self contained all round plant able to curb the pain of the sick and put a smile on the faces of the recreational user. There was something for everyone, and so much diversity it was like being at the entrance gates of Willy Wonkers chocolate factory ...

With the highs inevitably the lows rear their ugly faces too! The Seed business was like Brail for the blind; you could feel it but it was not visible to the eye.

Fast food phenomena began to replace the quality home cooked specialties of specific cultures making the taste for the entire world the same or similar. It was like we went to sleep one night after a hearty meal from mum and woke to MacDonald's or Kentucky Fried Chicken. The advent of feminized seed use and production came with a lot of promises of greatness but really achieved a backward step or a Holt more to the point in cannabis breeding. For the seed companies to survive and give to the people what they were vainly promised meant breeding took a back seat. Feminized seed has its use but its appeal and promises represented a bigger threat to the armchair farmers. Cannabis was leaving the subculture world it had grown up in and flourished in for reasons of integrity and quality only to be consumed by fame and fortune. It has now reached a moment of rock star status and it seems that the stardom has blinded the masses.

Without blaming anyone or any one company, we must take responsibility as a group at the state of affairs that cannabis breeding is in at this moment. It is not the fault of any one event or phenomena, it is at a point where fertilizing a selected clone mother with chemical induction seems to constitute breeding...but it is nothing to do with breeding. In fact there is now a shift for established seed companies to buy in certain feminized seeds from 6 or 8 different seed producers and rename them according to their company's names but the seed sold is the same. So the only difference is that seed became easier to make and cheaper to make and process of renaming it and repackaging it made it somehow different from each other. It has little or nothing to do with breeding a strain which takes a minimum of 2 years from beginning to end, whereas feminizing a seed from a female selected plant with chemicals takes 6-10 weeks to produce seed. A company only needs to keep female plants and not males so

the entire cost of research and mother rooms and numbers of plants are all less and therefore cheaper to maintain.

So why does seed, especially feminized seed become so expensive if everything to do with it makes it more efficient and cheaper? Where do genetics origins arrive from for these seeds and can we be sure their descriptions are precise? In simple we cannot be sure nor do we really know where these origins arise from since most new seed companies like ones in Spain or Canada for example are all derived from regular old school genetics. That led to popularizing a female selected clone and then chemically inducing it to make female seed. In fact most new seed companies do not even hold a male in their camps! So with the increase in demand for promises of only female plants to those growers too lazy to select a plant from a natural set of seed, comes a decline in cannabis breeding which is what the seed industry arose from. It is almost like we are cutting off our nose despite our face, knowingly for convenience and sacrificing special or rare genes for mediocrity. Soon all seed will be the same if seed companies keep going down the road of least resistance, ease and convenience. You will not need to look at anything other than the price to make a decision for what to grow as that will be the only difference between seed companies.

It disturbs me greatly the seed business of today, even though I have been in it the past quarter of a century. When a person like me is disturbed by the industry he loves and has a passion for, how is the best way to explain that to the new comers without putting them off? It is a time now for the end user, medical patient and medical grower to get educated about the companies they choose to support. My advice to any potential seed buyers for the future is to first do a lot of reading to find out what plant seems to cater for your needs. Then go on some forums and ask other growers who have experience with a particular seed or plant, not rely on the descriptions and hype from any one company.

The wealth of grow reports and discussion and photos about strains are sufficiently represented in the public and private forums and you only need time to read and digest the information. The internet makes the end user the boss if they manage to do a good grow report, as those who review the thread usually believe a person who bought the seed and grew the seed, as would I ! Finding seed close to the origins of the pedigree is important, and instead of just looking at a name of a strain find when the strain originated from, which company, if they keep both parent plants, and so on. But most of all, the thing that will make seed companies become less dishonest will be a support desk. If a seed company is prepared to sell a product in blind trust to a client who is paying for it based on the integrity of the company, then the same company should also be able to support any problems or questions or supply a back up service to their resellers. Without support or having a place to be able to ask questions, the seed will be like playing the lottery.