

# The Details About Organic Cannabis

Editorial by Darren Toth, May 30, 2020

How organic can you get, and does it make a difference in the final product?



We recently had lunch with some charming folks on their bucolic mountain farm in southern Oregon. Sturdy old trees descended along the hillside towards Sucker Creek, a rocky, crystal clear mountain stream that snaked through the landscape as it carved a path towards the Illinois River.



Kate and Vin Deschamps, along with their core team members Caleb Padget, Jonathan Ruspil, and Grant (whose last name I missed), sat with us on their patio and discussed their approach to organic cannabis cultivation over pizza and homegrown strawberries.

“There’s only about 15 of us farms in Oregon that are “Certified Kind”, Vin says, “and we are really proud that we are one of them. Lots of people want to get the ‘Kind’ certification, but then they see what they have to do to keep it, and they don’t want to do it. But, I believe it is worth it.”



Kate and Vin are serious about organic farming, from the vegetables in their garden, to the honey they source from their beehives, to the organic cannabis they grow for their brand, “54 Green Acres”. Despite the name,

they only use one of their acres to grow cannabis; small batch, naturally fed, planted in the ground with consistent maintenance.

The phrase “Certified Kind” kept coming up. As the conversation went on, it dawned on me that my gracious hosts were talking about more than just a passing nod to organic sustainability. I turned to Jon and Caleb and asked, “So wait, you guys don’t use ANY petrochemicals or chemically processed nutrients at any stage of growth?”

Jon sat back in his chair with a proud gleam in his eye. “We don’t use any of that stuff. Not anywhere on this whole farm.”

Here is where I admit that I have been cynical in the past about certified organic products. Truth is I don’t really know much about it at all, so I tend to be skeptical. I returned home to Springfield and started looking at the requirements of “Certified Kind™” marijuana in my attempt to start understanding more. I also stocked up on a wide variety of “Certified Kind™” approved organic cannabis to give the research some context. Call it journalistic integrity.

What I discovered is that “Certified Kind™” is one of several privately owned consultant companies, staffed by experienced organic farming specialists, licensed by the Oregon Liquor Control Commission, but NOT a government agency. They monitor and assist their clients through very specific guidelines involving the growing and processing of cannabis. These regulations are designed towards socially and environmentally sound practices, and farms pay these people for guidance on natural methods for growing marijuana.

The founder, Andrew Black, has over a decade experience with Oregon Tilth, one of the Nation’s most trusted organic produce regulation agencies. He and his team have designed guidelines based on standards set by the International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movements (IFOAM), the USDA National Organic Program (NOP), and other national organic programs from Canada, Mexico, and the European Union.

## So what does it take to qualify?

To put it mildly, these guys ain’t messing around. There is a detailed list on their website if you want to go through it, but I can run down some of the basics for you here so you get an idea.

- Growers must keep detailed records on every product used in growing, including where and how it was produced. According to the Certified Kind regulations, no product can come from “land whose inhabitants or farmers have been impoverished, dispossessed, colonized, expelled, exiled, or killed or which is currently in dispute regarding...its ownership.” (Certified Kind™)



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- No use of radiation, genetically modified organisms, sewage sludge, or nanotechnology in the production of nutrients or pesticides.
- Workers must have adequate tools and safety equipment, and be fairly compensated for their labor through every stage of production.
- Water sources must be pure and not be diverted from other areas. Drainage must be carefully cycled back into the ecosystem.
- Diesel and gasoline generators are to be limited or avoided on Certified Kind properties. Any spills or contamination of petrochemicals in the soil anywhere on the property must be full contained and reported.
- All indoor growing must include an “energy audit”, where electricity use is limited to the smallest carbon footprint possible.
- Growing area must be properly cordoned off from all other natural ecosystems, leaching nothing into the surrounding soil that may offset the pH or other local microbiology.
- No synthetic nutrients of any kind, or any elements of a nutrient mix containing any genetically or chemically altered substances.
- Yearly crop rotation is required for in-ground planting, to insure proper nutritive balance in the soil.



of appropriate organic growing mediums including, “Bone meal, feather meal, blood meal, guano, non-GMO micro organisms, rock dust, and alfalfa.” (Certified Kind™) Farms under the regulations also have a great deal of guidance on how to maximize the growth potential of their crops.

Currently, the majority of their clients (15) are in Oregon, but they have consulted for farms in Nevada, Washington, Ohio, and Michigan. As legalization spreads through the country, and as more refined palates develop around custom crafted cannabis, services that verify the purity and quality of a farm will be in higher demand. People want a recognizable logo that signifies that high standards have been met.

**The Final Analysis**

For you, my gentle readers, I have indeed compared the tastes, the terpene balance, the subtle variances between the smoothness of smoke in a double blind flavor test against non-organic flower strains. I have sampled several strains grown by 54 Green Acres through this process and I can say that I do taste a difference. The flavors seem richer, fresher somehow, with smooth smoke and there is much less tar on my pre-roll’s crutch at the end.

The dry herb vaporizer is really where the difference comes into play. Adjusting the temperature of vapes bring out an orchestras of flavors with each strain.

Special thanks to these good people!

The problem is, I cannot taste that difference for you. It is something you must ultimately experience yourself. You might try organic cannabis and sense no difference at all.

I do recommend trying a Certified Kind™ organic brand if you come across the logo in your dispensary, or at least strike up a conversation with your bud tender about the difference. You might learn a bit more about your own tastes in fine cannabis.



KALI BY 54 GREEN ACRES

These are just some of the basics; of course the details and expertise come when you buy the whole package, which according to their website is around \$2500 a season to regulate and approve a farm’s commitment to the strict process and business ethics of organic farming.

Despite the heavy list of things they say you can’t do, they also offer a list



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