

GROWERTALKS

Corr on Cannabis

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Cross Words and Experts

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Because of production schedules these columns are written a while before they're published. In normal times, that doesn't matter. Now is not normal. COVID-19 and the related economic fallout has turned the world upside down.

There are calendar years, dog years and cannabis years, but COVID-19 years are 100 times faster than even cannabis years. Given how fast things are moving, anything I write today will seem dated tomorrow, more so when you read it.

Undaunted, our hero plunges on.

Like any industry, the cannabis industry has been impacted by COVID-19. These impacts are a sign of normalization of the industry. In most states, cannabis dispensaries are considered essential businesses and are allowed

to remain open, while some other businesses are deemed non-essential.

As lockdowns were proposed then implemented in states like Illinois and California, there were surges in cannabis purchases almost as much as purchases of toilet paper. Medical patients and people using cannabis recreationally didn't want to be caught without a supply.

The cannabis industry produces materials for human consumption, and therefore, uses gloves, gowns and face masks to maintain good sanitation, which are now in very short supply. Nevertheless, some cannabis companies have donated their supplies to the much more critical needs of first responders and health professionals.

I'd like to editorialize a bit about something that I've seen in the cannabis industry and in how the world at large has responded to COVID-19. Some folks look at what they see around them, feel it doesn't match with what experts say, and conclude they're right and the experts are wrong.

A professor friend of mine tells the story about how every semester he would ask his class if the sun rotated around the earth or the earth around the sun. Despite the efforts of Galileo Galilei and scientists over the last four centuries, he was able to convince some students the sun rotated around the earth by making them focus on what THEY observe—the sun rising in the east and setting in the west.

This fallacy of relying simply on personal observations is often compounded when an early research report is

incomplete or proven wrong. Sometimes a scientist proposes something that later is disproven. That leads some people to discount EVERYTHING said by experts.

Science works by putting out theories, supporting them with the best available evidence, then testing to see how these theories fit the big picture. It's like a crossword puzzle. If the clue to 12 down is "a four-letter word for a stupid person," a theory could be "dope." And if 12 across starts with the letter D and the letter O fits the next word across, that adds evidence the theory is correct. It makes sense.

But I hope you didn't write that in with pen because the next two letters don't match—they're L and T. The initial theory didn't hold up, since "dolt" is another word for a stupid person.

It's only when the crossword puzzle is nearly complete that you can cross-check your theories and discard the ones that no longer work and confirm others. Science is like that, too. We're a long way from knowing all we need to know about either cannabis or COVID-19—some theories are right and some will need to be revised.

In a cannabis example, experts say hermaphrodites develop in cannabis plants that have been stressed or grown with erratic photoperiods. But perhaps a grower notices hermaphrodites after changing to a new fertilizer. Personal observation says the experts are wrong and the fertilizer is to blame. A wise grower considers the advice of experts and checks for things that have been demonstrated to cause hermaphrodites. At the same time, the grower can conduct trials to test the theory the fertilizer might be a so-far-undiscovered cause of hermaphrodites.

For a COVID-19 example, Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, has said, "There are things called models, and when someone creates a model, they put in various assumptions. And the model is only as good and as accurate as your assumptions. And whenever the modelers come in, they give a worst-case scenario and a best-case scenario. Generally, the reality is somewhere in the middle."

Regardless of what you see around you, and regardless of your personal theory, pay attention to the experts. They're experts because they've done what they do for years, sometimes for decades. They know stuff.

Please pay attention to cannabis experts when growing cannabis and infection disease experts regarding COVID-19. If we've been following the advice of experts, I hope by the time you read this we're seeing the light at the end of the COVID-19 tunnel. Maintain social distancing and wash those hands (and follow additional advice experts have recommended since I wrote this)! **GT**

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