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The Queen of the Flowers

A Story of Love and Self-Discovery

Studying biology and being a pothead, a grower, and a woman has not been simple. A lot of people may think that the life of a gardener is easy, but it's not. Taking care of our plants implies not only preventing and eliminating pests and fungi, but also resolving other problems linked to a balance between temperature and humidity and even with us. Growing together with the plants—in our case, *Cannabis*—implies the political commitment of being with them during their cycle, creating a relationship, and accompanying them. It requires a great deal of observation and patience to get the results we want. It's not just planting a seed and waiting for the harvest: it's a long process that you have to go through and learn from.

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The First Puff

Fortunately, there are only women in my family, since the *mens* were conspicuously absent. My mother, a worker, a government employee, labored almost all day long for a wage that would put food on the table, and I only saw her at night. I remember being about fourteen when I was in the afternoon shift at my middle school. That's where I met my first "friends," who smoked marijuana between classes. One day I was curious and wanted to try it, and they invited me to have some. When I took the first puff, I remember tasting something like burned grass and starting to cough right away. After getting rid of all the smoke, the only thing I could do was to laugh with an unending laugh that made me cry; my stomach hurt from laughing so much, and then I knew: "This is good weed," I said, and from then on I began smoking cannabis. I was very young as a user, and I did it fully intent on

making my schoolwork more enjoyable. From then on I felt that it inspired me to do things like paint and draw, but I didn't yet give the marihuana plant the full worth it essentially has.

My mother caught me smoking at my fifteenth birthday party. I didn't have a big fancy party; rather, we took a trip to the Mayan Riviera in Quintana Roo, and I had a little bag of dope, a metal pipe, and a lighter with me. In Valladolid, we stayed at a hotel and one day, while I was bathing, my mother looked for a sanitary napkin in my suitcase and found my stash. The end of that trip was harsh, mainly for her, because she had to accept that her young daughter enjoyed smoking marihuana.

When we got home, she told my older sister, who my mother thought would help her to get me away from weed. That same night my sister told me that she had been smoking marihuana for seven years and had never been caught. It was a very open talk that made me realize the stigmas that existed, not only in my family, but in the world in general, in this sexist, heteronormative society, and that something considered criminal was even worse if you're a woman.

However, that was the time in my life when I felt the most confident. Instead of stopping smoking cannabis, my sister and I began to smoke together and our relationship improved. My mother began to realize that when we smoked, we really didn't turn into juvenile delinquents or become aggressive; on the contrary, we enjoyed dinner or watching a TV show or a movie together even more. As time went on, she realized that it was part of the development of our personalities, and we began to find out more about its medicinal properties, not only its entertainment value. For example, I remember that my granny always carried alcohol with weed for her pain. That was how we decided to grow some plants at home for our own consumption and not risk getting it through violent means, like from drug dealers. My house became a safe, cannabis-tolerant place.

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As I began to wander the streets of my neighborhood in Tláhuac, my social and school life began to fill up with men. I couldn't understand why they were the only ones who felt they had the freedom to smoke and why they always told their sexist jokes or made inappropriate comments when I was there. It began to be bothersome, unsafe, and uncomfortable for my "friends" or "boyfriends" at the time would dare to tell me when and with whom I should smoke. At the time, I thought it was normal; I didn't cut them off; and I even thought that they were looking out for me because I was in their space, the men's space. I started questioning myself about the role we women played in that reality and, mainly, what place we wanted to occupy as cannabis consumers.

I decided to get away from those circles where I felt threatened, and they began to think of me as a rebel and a feminist just because I was following my own personal interests, trying to build other non-normative ways of being a cannabis consumer. I think I broke down the patriarchal hierarchy thanks to the opportunity of having a better informed consumption at home with my mom and my sisters.

The Garden of Beautiful Flowers

At university, I met a group of biologists like myself; of their own free will, sure of themselves and as potheads, they helped me finally find myself. For the first time I had a loving relationship with other women whom today I consider to be my sisters. Thanks to that, I began to feel more secure about my decisions. They were the inspiration for me to start growing. As I went through my coursework, I also learned to crochet in a unique style, as part of the fourth generation of family crocheters.

Ever since I was a little girl, I liked fashion very much and I wanted to study design. My mother didn't have the money needed to support me in that choice of studies, though, so crocheting, redesigning, and creating a garment from nothing became the best experiences of my life, even though I only crocheted for myself. And cannabis helped inspire my creations. At the same time, I developed a taste for electronic music and raves. Since those expenses were beyond my mother's budget, I had to manage my time, and what began as a hobby is today my lifestyle: that's how Tejidos Árbol de la Vida (Crocheting



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Harvesting the Fruits of Our Labor

The Covid-19 pandemic left us without classes and not being able to move around. The easiest solution was to self-organize and care for each other where we consumed, in this case, cannabis. Dulce Marihuana, a sister from our college class, invited us to participate in *Terraza Weera* and there we met *Jardinex Chirri*.³ The idea was to build a network of cannabis growers and people with other skills, that would question the prevailing ideas about capitalizing on marijuana and to call for the building of a cannabis culture from that platform using our own knowledge about growing without imitating the models originating in the Global North.

So there, my objectives and personal desires met, and after a few months, I was collaborating in that space. It was a beautiful time, when we began to weave a network of local producers and incentivize barter and fair trade without intermediaries, while we managed our organic gardening materials, encouraging people to replicate self-cultivation.

In that sense, then, I consider *Terraza Weera* a space free from sexist violence where we still have to continue to deconstruct ourselves, attempting to be equitable, non-hierarchical, and respectful of all. I feel safe there and taken into account for what I am: *a woman pothead*.

We turned ourselves into a fruit that matures from the flower. For the first time I tangibly felt the return on my theoretical contributions in an authentic hothouse for growing cannabis. By spending most of the pandemic with the plants and observing them, watching them grow and change, I realized that it is a labor of a great deal of love and patience. The plants also communicate with you, perhaps not in language like human language, but they show when they need something through how they look physically. You can see when they need water, humidity, light, nutrients, prevention, and even when they need attention, because they're alive and they feel. If what you want are

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a *Tree of Life*) began; my crochet creations brand pays my bills.¹

In a girlfriend's apartment, we began an indoor crop in the living room. We set up the electricity connections; we got the lamps, the pots, the substratum, the compost, and the nutrients. We prepared the germination every full moon so the seeds would take the maximum advantage of that light and grow appropriately. We played the plants music, talked to them, and smoked with them. That was when we decided to form a women's collective called *Girls with Weed* on Instagram, where we shared all this craziness and what we learned.² The only thing we wanted was to keep researching, disseminating, and informing people about the plant's properties and uses and the different ways of being consumers without stigma.

While we were going to the university, we did indoor cultivation, putting into practice what we were learning in botany classes; this was our first theoretical-practical experience. Observing the plants in their vegetative state, we noted that they grew both in length and width and their leaves gradually took on their popular form and some very curious-looking offshoots appeared in their axils that looked like little hairs or balls, which revealed the sex of the plant—you might think that they're all masculine or feminine, but only 7 percent have a single sex and the rest are hermaphrodites. If they have only one sex, they need air-borne pollination to reproduce, and this only happens if we want to preserve certain characteristics for our benefit. That is the power of artificial selection.

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“good” marijuana plants, you have to care for them like your daughters.

Thanks to the experience of planting using my scientific knowledge, I realized that we had really built a method for cultivation. That’s why we were encouraged enough to give workshops on caring for the plants, extracting medicines from them, and cooking with them. They were all collectively done, with many workshop coordinators and friends that we have met during this cannabis adventure. That was how I was able to become completely independent with Dulce and how we began to live alone in an apartment of and for women and go to cannabis culture activities. We became more involved in the community, but we also noted again that the milieu was led—once again— by men. We decided not to get close to the “leaders” with ambitions linked to political parties or profit-making, and Dulce and I proposed workshops with a gender perspective, activities with autonomist proposals, and to pollinate knowledge for autonomy. Getting to know many cannabis-oriented women has been one of the best experiences of my life.

In 2022, I represented Terraza Weera to carry out a workshop alone called “Super-erotic Girls” for the anniversary of the Super-Smoker Girls feminist project, where we talked about sexuality and the possibility of self-generating our pleasures with cannabis to sensitize us. That was how we worked for a new cultural construct organized around marijuana. I went to different sources to write a document in which I explained the difference between male and female plants, and the reasons why the reproductive structures of the female plants (the flowers) are important for preparing many of the “pothead” medications and other products. These female plants have trichomes, shiny structures that contain substances called cannabinoids, and these molecules have many pharmacological and recreational applications. The male plants, by contrast, do not. Nevertheless, there are several kinds of trichomes, which means that all the plants, male or

female, can have many applications, such as the fiber called hemp.

Today, the genetics industry is working to modify the plants and seeds to get them to produce many trichomes and terpenes (the components that give plants their aroma) to achieve better production and sales. However, growers can fix genetic characteristics naturally adapted to their surroundings according to their needs by following up the regular local seeds year after year, without spending thousands of pesos in seeds or damaging the environment. The genetically modified seeds are a reflection of capitalist corporate interests to get us to depend on their companies at the same time that they destroy local flora, making it lose genetic diversity and increasing its vulnerability to pests. All this creates dependency on certain fertilizers and causes allergic reactions in people unused to them or who are sensitive to cannabinoids like THC (tetrahydrocannabinol).

In my experience, when you study biology and you grow cannabis at the same time, the only thing you want is to learn as much about it as possible. You want to study its morphology, phenology, anatomy, and biochemistry, and you realize that it’s unique, very special in its adaptations and physical, anatomic, and biochemical structures. There’s no other plant like cannabis. Unfortunately, it’s not easy to study in Mexico due to current legislation. When I was doing the social service for my bachelor’s degree, I was able to study its anatomy, and I was surprised at the figures that make up its cells’ tissue: a stain on the stalk and a heart in the petiole, the stalk that attaches the leaf blade to the stem.

Its components, something we can’t see with the naked eye, are what turn cannabis into what it is: a weed that can grow almost anywhere, in an empty lot or at a banquet, but that, with the love of a gardener, can grow all the characteristics worthy of the queen of the *Cannabaceae*. **MM**

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Notes

- 1 For more about this, see <https://www.facebook.com/tejiendorai cesencrochet/>. [Editor’s Note.]
- 2 Visit their site at <https://instagram.com/girls.withweed?igshid=YmMyMTA2M2Y=>. [Editor’s Note.]
- 3 For information about Jardinerx, see <https://www.facebook.com/vaikidu/>. [Editor’s Note.]