

HAWAII MEDICAL CANNABIS NEWSLETTER

The Science

Know Before You Grow, Part 1: Anatomy of the Cannabis Plant

Many patients in Hawai'i have registered to grow medical cannabis. In this series of "Know Before You Grow," we cover the science of growing the cannabis plant, which is mainly grown for flower buds used for medicine. Learning about the different parts of the plant can help you know what nutrients the plant needs, spot diseases, find the best time to harvest, and make sure the plant produces important medicinal compounds like cannabinoids and terpenes.

Bracts and calyx: Bracts are trichome rich tear-shaped leaves and calyx are microscopic cells that protect the plant's reproductive organs. Along with pistils and stigmas, these parts form the flower buds that are used for medicine.



Pistils and stigmas make up the female plant's reproductive organs. Pistils appear in the pre-flowering stage as white hairs at the node and help identify female plants early on. Stigmas are located at the top of the pistils and are used to catch male pollen. Pistils and stigmas change color as the plant ends its flowering stage and help cultivators know when to harvest.



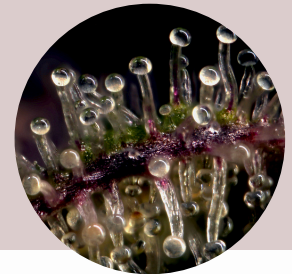
Cola is the main flower bud at the top of the cannabis plant. The buds from the cola are referred to as regular-size buds and are considered more valuable because of their high concentration of trichomes, which contain cannabinoids and terpenes.



Lower flower buds are the lower parts of the cannabis plant. A.k.a. "popcorn buds," they may have fewer trichomes than the flower buds from the top and are sold at a lower cost.



Trichomes are mushroom-shaped resin glands that produce cannabinoids, terpenes, and flavonoids, the important medicinal compounds found in the plant. Trichomes protect the plant from pests and are mostly found on the flower buds and sugar leaves. Their color changes as the plant matures, helping growers know when to harvest.





Cannabis seeds come in three types: regular (naturally occurring) and feminized and autoflower (modified). Regular seeds grow male or female plants. Feminized seeds grow only female plants, which make medicine. Autoflower seeds are feminized, easy to grow, and flower quickly without needing a light cycle.



Roots of the cannabis plant are strong and readily take in heavy metals and other harmful substances. The cannabis plant can help to clean soil that is contaminated with these harmful substances; a process called bioremediation. The contaminants the roots take in can end up in the flower material. Therefore, clean soil is key to safe medicine.

Stem gives the plant structure and stability and helps transport water and nutrients from the soil to the leaves, branches and flower buds. Cultivators will train stems to enhance flower bud production, light exposure, and aeration.



Fan leaves are the largest leaves. Their main function is to photosynthesize for the plant. The leaves can help identify plant diseases, nutrient deficiencies, and pest infections.



Male plant does not produce the flower buds used for medicine and are usually thrown out once identified. Male plants can fertilize female plants, producing seeds and low-grade medicine. In general, male plants will show their sex in 3-6 weeks. Look for little balls (called stamens) that grow on the nodes of the stalk.

Sugar leaves grow between the cannabis flower buds. They get their name from the trichomes that cover the leaves, which looks like a dusting of sugar. They are usually removed after harvest to make the flower buds look more appealing.



Hawai'i State Law

Understanding Certifying Medical Provider's and Patient's Responsibilities

It's important to know that both you and your recommending cannabis provider have legal responsibilities. Together these responsibilities establish a bona-fide physician/APRN-patient relationship as required by Hawai'i law. The Department of Health relies upon the certifying provider's professional opinion based on the bona-fide patient-provider relationship that the provider has with the patient, which should include a comprehensive review of the patient's medical history and current medications, Hawaii Administrative Rules (HAR) [§11-160-2](#).

Certifying Medical Provider's Responsibilities

- Complete a full assessment of the qualifying patient's medical history and current medical condition, including conducting a review of the qualifying patient's medical records related to the debilitating condition as medically appropriate
- Ensure that the patient's use of medical cannabis does not pose a threat of harm to the patient or others
- Certify patient's qualifying conditions on the OMCCR application
- Assess patients in person (telehealth available for renewals with the same certifying medical provider)
- Explain the potential risks and benefits of medical cannabis use
- Maintain records of the qualifying patient's treatment and condition in accordance with medically accepted standards
- Provide follow-up care and treatment as medically appropriate to the qualifying patient and assess the qualifying patient's condition during medical cannabis use

Patient's Responsibilities

- If available provide documentation of qualifying medical condition(s) (see list of [qualifying conditions](#) here¹)
- Provide a valid state ID/driver's license/passport and caregiver ID (if applicable)
- Pay the state application fee of \$38.50 for a one-year certification or \$77 for a two-year renewal certification
- Pay the provider fee, which varies by provider



Application Process

- Patients and certifying providers should determine together whether to do an online application or a paper application.
- Patients who have an online account and create their application will receive their 329 cards via digital download. The digital 329 card can be saved on your phone for verification, used at the dispensaries, and can be printed.
- Patients whose certifying medical provider completes the application will receive a physical 329 card in the mail only, not a digital copy.

What to Expect from Your Certifying Medical Provider

When choosing a certifying provider in Hawai'i, keep in mind that each has his or her own experience and special skills. It's important to pick the one that best fits your needs. We asked providers statewide to share their thoughts on what patients should expect during a medical cannabis consultation. Here's a summary of what certifying providers shared.

*DOH does not endorse any providers, and any opinions expressed by the providers are explicitly their own.

Provider-patient relationship: Expect the certification evaluation to be the start of an ongoing relationship, not just a means to obtain a registration card.

Appointment preparation: Come prepared with a valid ID, caregiver ID (if applicable), medical documentation, and a list of current medications. Be ready to discuss your condition and previous cannabis use.

Comprehensive evaluation: Get a thorough review of your medical history, assessment of current medication list to help identify drug to drug interactions, and evaluation of your current condition relevant to the 329 application.

Patient education: Receive explanations about the endocannabinoid system, pros and cons of different delivery methods, and how to integrate cannabis use into your lifestyle and exercise plans.

Regulatory guidance: Receive guidance on current rules and regulations, responsibilities as 329 cardholders or caregivers, and safe and effective cannabis use practices.

Individualized dosing: Receive tailored dosing guidance based on your medical condition and tolerance, with extra care for novice users. Discuss modes of delivery and find the best products for your medical needs. Discuss how to use medical cannabis safely and effectively.

Efficient processing: Expect the provider to go over details of the application process, ensure your application is processed promptly and efficiently.

Cannabinoid medicine specialist: Know the importance of being evaluated by a provider specializing in Cannabinoid Medicine, ideally certified by a recognized organization.

Follow-up care: Schedule follow-up appointments to answer questions, adjust dosages, and manage any potential side effects.



Top 5 Questions to Ask Your Certifying Medical Provider

1. What type(s) of products do you recommend for my qualifying condition or symptoms?
2. How should I take my cannabis medicine: eat it, drink it, inhale it, use localized relief?
3. What is the appropriate dose of the cannabis medicine you are recommending?
4. Are there any drug interactions or side effects I should be monitoring for?
5. Do you offer follow-up visits to address any additional questions I may have?



HAWAII STATE LAW

Guide to Understanding Patient Privacy

OMCCR does not share your specific medical information, such as your qualifying condition(s), with dispensaries. However, when visiting a dispensary, your 329 card registration number, name, and date of birth are verified to ensure you are a valid medical cannabis patient.

Additionally, dispensaries have access to the total amount of cannabis you've purchased across all dispensaries, which helps ensure that your purchases stay within your allowed limit (see our [June 2024 newsletter](#)).

As a patient, you are not required to share any medical details with dispensary staff, though you may choose to if you wish. **If you choose to share medical details with dispensary staff, the dispensary is required by law to keep those details confidential.** While a medical cannabis dispensary may not be subject to HIPAA laws, Hawai'i Administrative Rules (HAR) [§11-850-40](#) requires every dispensary to "safeguard and keep confidential from public disclosure any personally identifying information and the medical condition" of a medical cannabis patient.

WHAT'S NEW

Medical Cannabis Certificate Course

The Hawai'i state public library system is offering a free online 6-week medical cannabis certificate course. This course is designed for both medical cannabis patients and healthcare professionals. The course will cover a range of topics related to the use of medical cannabis, including its history, effects on the body, legal and social considerations, and healthcare applications.

- Registered Nurses can earn 8 contact hours offered by ALLEGRA Learning Solutions, LLC.
- Patients will earn a certificate upon completion of all course work and final exam.
- The instructional materials required for this course are included in enrollment and will be available online.

Link can be found here :
[Certificate in medical cannabis](#)

<https://education.gale.com/l-hawaii/online-courses/medical-cannabis-certificate/?tab=requirements>

*DOH does not endorse these courses or information provided by the course instructors or instructional materials.

