

ilgm™

Ready for Harvest?

how to
tell when
the time
is right



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Introduction

WHEN ARE CANNABIS PLANTS READY TO HARVEST?

Harvesting at the right time is key to getting the best quality out of your cannabis. While it might feel a little daunting at first, the good news is that timing your harvest isn't rocket science.

It's all about watching for a few key signs and learning what to look for. Once you know these cues, you'll be on your way to harvesting buds at their peak potency, aroma, and flavor. Let's break down how to know when it's harvest time.



Understanding Ripeness

LEADING UP TO THE HARVEST

Your cannabis plant will give you a few hints when it's ready to harvest. Typically, the process begins around 8 to 12 weeks after flowering starts, depending on the strain.

During this time, keep an eye on two main visual indicators; the trichomes and the pistils. Both will change color as the plant matures, signaling when it's the best time to chop for the desired effects.

Left:

An unripe cannabis plant.
Its pistils are still white and its trichomes are all clear and transparent.

Right:

A ripe cannabis plant.
The majority of its pistils have changed to a red or brown color and its trichomes have become mostly milky.

**“Trichomes tell you about
potency, while Pistils show
overall plant maturity.”**

ILGM's Herb M Green
2025



Trichomes, Pistils and Stigmas

THE MAIN DIFFERENCES

Trichomes are tiny, resinous glands packed with cannabinoids and terpenes. They look like little crystals or frosty mushrooms coating the buds.

Pistils are the hair-like structures that grow out of the flowers, with stigmas being the colorful tips of those hairs. Together, they help you figure out if your plant is ready.

Trichomes tell you about potency, while pistils show overall plant maturity.

Left you see a group of Trichomes.

Right you see the Pistils and its Stigmas.

The start of the flowering process in cannabis plants

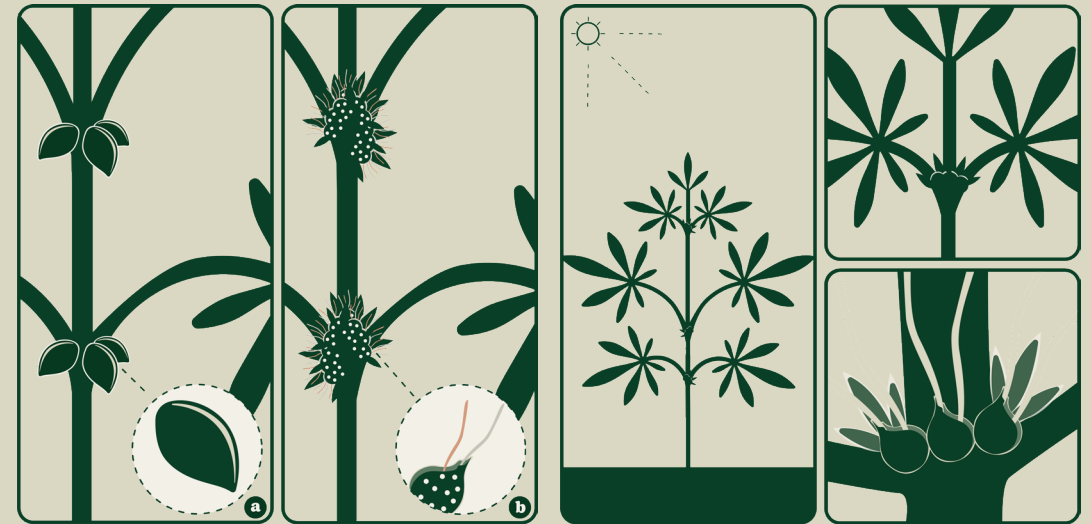
START OF FLOWERING TO EARLY BUDS

Female plants develop flowers with prominent pistils, which are small, hair-like structures designed to catch pollen. These flowers also produce resinous trichomes rich in cannabinoids.

In contrast, male plants form pollen sacs instead of flowers, which release pollen for reproduction. Male plants generally grow taller and less bushy than females, focusing their energy on producing pollen rather than resin.

For a closer inspection, check the top left image for an example between male and female characteristics on a cannabis plant.

The remaining three images show an indication of the first three weeks of the flowering process.

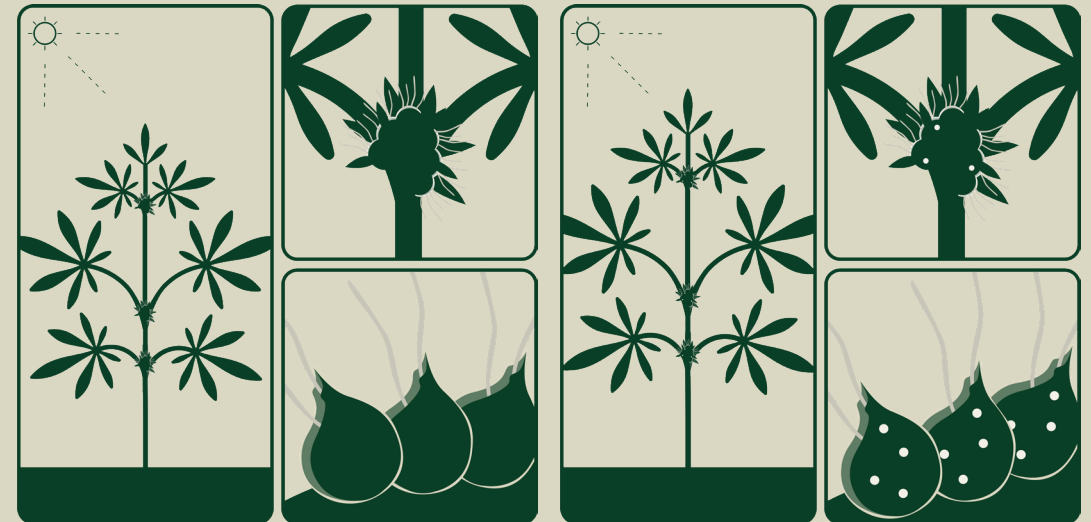


a Male pollensacks

b Female flower

Flowering stage - Week 1

Starting the flowering cycle of a cannabis plant. You will see the first signs of flowering tops!



Flowering stage - Week 2

During this week, you will see the first sign of pistils and pre-flowers on the plant.

Flowering stage - Week 3

This week will see the end of the stretch and marks the start of the flower production on the plant.

Trichomes; when are they ripe?

WHAT TO LOOK FOR?



Clear

Trichomes are clear, not ready for harvest.



Milky

Trichomes are milky, nearing ready for harvest.



Amber

Trichomes have partially changed to amber. These are ready for harvest!

Trichomes go through three main stages: clear, milky, and amber. Clear trichomes indicate it's too early to harvest.

When they turn milky, they're packed with THC, and it's nearly time. Amber trichomes mean THC is breaking down into CBN, which gives a more sedative effect.

Aim for mostly milky trichomes with about 15% amber for a balanced harvest.

Flowering overview

EARLY BUDS TO HARVEST

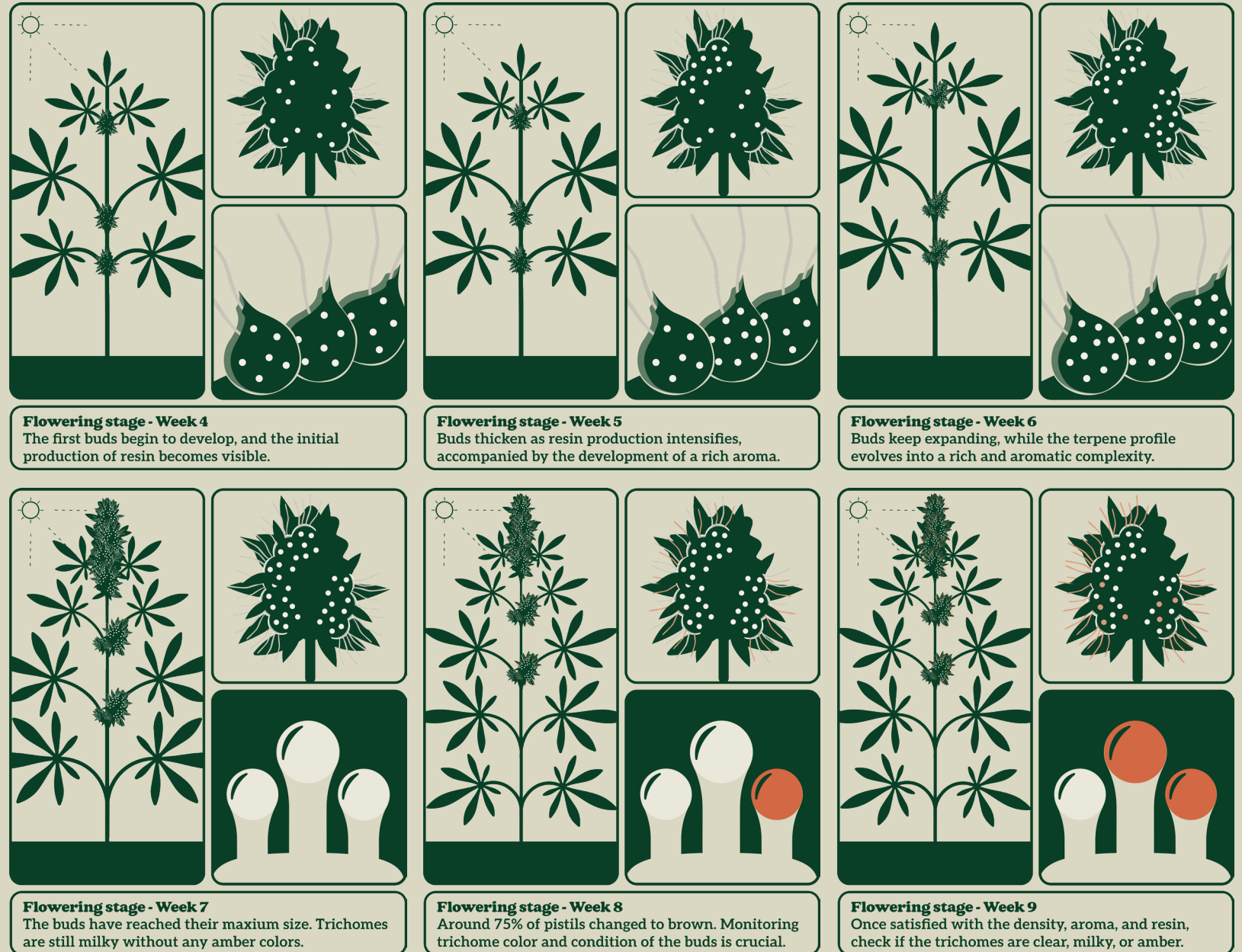
To the right, you'll find a concise yet informative summary detailing the key transformations the cannabis plant undergoes throughout its flowering phase.

This period is marked by significant biological and morphological changes, crucial for determining the plant's optimal harvest time.

Focus primarily on two critical indicators:

- Trichome Color Evolution
- Maturation of Pistils and Stigmas

Careful observation of these characteristics allows growers to harvest at a time that aligns with their desired potency and flavor profiles.





Signs of Maturity Pistils & Trichomes

ARE THEY READY?

Pistils start off white and gradually darken to red or brown as the plant matures. When about 70-90% of the pistils are dark, your plant is at peak maturity.

Early Harvest for Uplifting Effects:

If you prefer a lighter, more uplifting, and cerebral high, then consider harvesting when the trichomes are mostly cloudy or milky (85%) and 15% is still clear.

Peak Potency:

For the most desirable effect, flavor, and aroma, harvest when the majority of trichomes are milky (85%) and about 15% are amber-colored.

Late Harvest for Body High and Sedative Effects:

If you're after a couch-lock effect, wait until you see a higher ratio of amber trichomes.



Conclusion

WHAT COMES NEXT?

Once you've decided it's time to harvest, the next steps are just as important, drying and curing your buds properly will make all the difference in flavor and smoothness.

Take your time, and remember: mastering the art of harvesting takes practice. The more you grow, the more you'll get a feel for your ideal harvest window.

Happy growing!

SEE YOU
NEXT TIME!

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