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High quality nugs can look very different from one another.

fresher. Don't be afraid to ask to touch (with clean hands) before you buy, but don't mutilate it. Sticky is good!

Taste – Poor quality or old cannabis will taste bad no matter how you choose to use it. It may taste like dirty water from an ashtray, like dirty socks smell, or have an old musty taste. High quality cannabis will have a variety of different tastes when vaporized or eaten. You will likely find you prefer the taste or aftertaste of some types over others. This is completely subjective and different for everyone. I hypothesize that smells that are pleasing to us are an indication of how good of a match that particular plant material is for our needs. Of course, this is just something I wonder about not something I've seen in the literature.

Lab testing reveals that small leaves and trimmings are approximately 25 percent as potent as buds. This means you will need four times as much leaf or trim as you would flower buds to get the same level of potency. Remember that taste is important when making an edible. The smell will likely translate into the taste, so buy something that smells like it will taste good!

Regardless, buy high-quality cannabis. It will provide a much better experience all the way around. If you don't have access to a dispensary with lab tested medicine and knowledgeable folks behind the counter, you may need to take a leap of faith at first, and trust your instincts in deciding whether certain plant materials are worth buying. Use the tips mentioned above, and trust your body and your senses to let you know if it will benefit you therapeutically. In time, you will learn to easily distinguish between different qualities.

What to Buy?

In addition to outlining characteristics of the good, bad, and ugly, a few street terms might be helpful for those who cannot obtain medicine through a licensed provider.

What is the difference between good and bad?

- **Good Cannabis** is usually light green with a strong smell and lots of brightly colored red, orange, and sometimes blue or purple hairs. Much of the colors dissipate as the flowers are dried. Fresh flower buds will be sticky and slightly squishy to the touch, and there will be only a little **shake**—fine, dusty plant material collected at the bottom of the bag. Good cannabis is often referred to as “dank,” “kind bud,” or “chronic.” Individual dried cannabis buds are often called “nugs.” Nugs can be big or small, round or skinny, short or long depending on the variety.
- **Bad Cannabis** will be brown and likely have little smell. A bag of low quality street cannabis may have lots of shake collected at the bottom and a bad taste. It will often be overly dry and crumble easily. Who wants that? Bad cannabis is often called “schwag.”

Is It SWAG or Schwag?

Lately, I have been hearing the term “schwag,” that should be used to describe bad cannabis, as a word for giveaway items instead of the proper term SWAG—something we all get. It still makes me laugh aloud every time I hear “schwag” misused, especially when it is used by people of esteem in the community who would cringe if they knew what they were saying. On the other hand, can you imagine how surprised a group of college students would be to hear that they were getting a “schwag” bag? Several times I've had to explain to folks how it might be a good idea to use a different word. Thankfully they had a sense of humor.

What to Ask For

Bud is dried sinsemilla cannabis flower. It is the most expensive form of raw cannabis because it contains the highest concentration of therapeutic compounds. If you are inhaling your medicine, or making cannabis oil, bud is definitely the way to go.

Shake is the fine, dusty crumbs of plant material that break off the buds, leaves, and stems and collect in the bottom of a bag. If you are on a budget, consider making your butter and oil for cooking with quality shake instead of buds. You will still get a highly effective product but for far less money.