

Northwoods Botanicals

Kiana Abel

marketing & member services manager

OWNER

Gil & Owen Schwartz

LOCATION

Washburn, Wisconsin

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No, no. Don't blink twice, you're seeing correctly! That picture right there is of a big beautiful Cannabis flower. Grown locally, and yes, legally! Last year this flower (and about 1/4 acre of sister plants) were grown and harvested less than 15 miles from Ashland. The crop was grown by local farmer Gil Schwartz (and family) under his new enterprise, Northwoods Botanicals. (You might recognize his name from his other business Seasonally Sourced Foods, a local provider of sustainably harvested, wild-grown and specialty food crops.) In 2018, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection launched its hemp pilot program and one year later, staying true to their specialty crop roots, the Schwartz farm began cultivating CBD rich hemp plants. And voila, in early 2020, the co-op began carrying Northwoods Botanicals CBD drops. Local CBD at your service!

Of course, the version above is the *Cliff's Notes* version. The farmer's real version includes a three-year cultivation of 1/4 acre of grassland into a plant friendly, weed free farm space. Once the field was plowed, tilled under, and mounded, they employed a lasagna layering technique to minimize weed growth and maintain soil quality. It sounds a bit more technical coming from Gil. "Our hemp is grown in robust living soil topped with wood chip mulch, supplemented with plenty of organic matter, aerated compost tea, effective microbes, symbiotic mycorrhizae, and

assistance from beneficial insects. We shun synthetic and harmful pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers, and chlorinated water."

Isn't it nice to know your farmer?!

Amazingly, Gil (and wife Owen) accomplished all of this with a wheelbarrow. Okay, full disclosure, they did borrow a neighbor's tractor to till the land initially, but if you've ever worked clay soil, you'll give them a pass on that one. The crop is protected by a 7-foot deer fence, plus some visual growth barriers and of course by their farm dog, Tulsi. I asked if the plants suffered any loss last year, and Gil replied, "some rabbits got through our fence and chewed on a few of the stalk bases."

After their field was ready for planting, the farm went through Wisconsin's rigorous process of gaining licensure to grow and process a Cannabis crop – two separate licenses in their case. Simultaneously, they entered the world of choosing cannabis seeds. Picking seeds from a reputable company is a task in itself. With the market blowing up in the last 6 years seed origination must be researched from vetted sources or else the farm could end up with plants that won't pass rigorous state testing. At any point during the season, the crop is subject to inspection by the state. Before the crop can be harvested, a mandatory site inspection and randomized test is conducted by a certified representative. The state mandates this test to provide certainty that the farmer is not growing Cannabis plants that contain

THC, because *that* is illegal. If THC levels are detected over 0.3%, the farmer must destroy the crop, entirely. From the DATCP website, "If the final lab analysis exceeds 0.3% THC, the entire crop must be destroyed by the licensed grower within 10 days, pursuant to Wis. Admin. Code § ATCP 22.10."

Fortunately for Gil and the 2019 crop lab test came back at or below 0.3% THC and he was able to send the result of their hard work off to a manufacturing partner in Minnesota for CBD extraction & bottling. They do know hemp farmers that were not so lucky and are fully aware that security in crop growth is not a guarantee from year to year.

In an effort to stay ahead of the curve and ensure low THC percentage in the 2020 crop, Gil will trial new genetics that are dominant in cannabigerol (CBG). CBG, less known than its more famous counterparts, THC & CBD, is present in very low levels (around 1% or less) in most Cannabis strains. However, new



cultivars can reach levels upwards of 20% CBG. In terms of health effects CBG is similar to CBD, and according to some researchers, may be more potent.

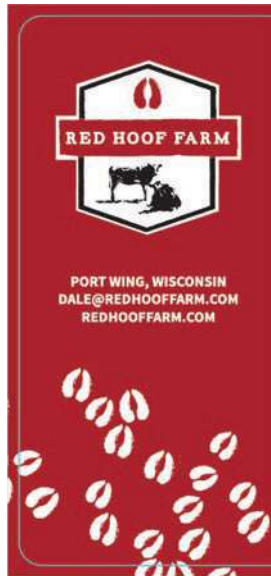
It never ceases to amaze me what farmers will go through to grow stuff. These two wheel-barrowed 100 cubic yards of wood chips into their ¾ acre garden space. Shovel, wheelbarrow, dump, rake, repeat. They work this way because it's challenging, good for the land they live on and in the end, good for the product. In speaking with Gil, he is proud of the work he's put in. He totally did that braggy farmer thing when a guest is given a tour. He talked about each detail of effort, and explained each little choice, and how that single choice benefits the plant, the land, and the product. At the Schwartz farm, efforts are based on bioavailability, permaculture, regenerative agriculture, and environmentalism. Did I mention their farm is run on solar? For us, as consumers how amazing is that dedication? We are presented with a product that has high bioavailability, sustainability and was produced by local hands. Knowing what it takes to grow crops in this area is admirable, and thank goodness for all the hearty farmers out there. If there is one thing that we have learned in going through a national pandemic, supply chains are not guaranteed and the more local our source, the more stable it is. So, hats off to Gil and family for working their butts off to bring us local CBD! 🌿



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