MR. GROW IT

THE HARVEST GUIDE

When to chop, how to trim, how to dry, how to cure. The four places a good grow gets ruined after the plant is cut.

When it’s ready • Trimming • Drying • Curing • The mistakes I see most

The short version

Harvesting isn’t the finish line. You can grow a beautiful plant for months and lose the quality in the last two weeks. Read the plant, not the calendar. Dry it slow and cool. Leave it alone while it dries. Then give the cure the weeks it needs.

The numbers, up front.

Step	What I look for
Ready to harvest	Most stigmas turned and receded. Trichomes mostly cloudy, a few amber, few clear.
Drying room	60–68 °F (16–20 °C) · 55–60% humidity · dark · gentle air movement, never a fan on the buds
Drying time	7–10 days. Small branches snap instead of bending when it’s done.
Curing jar	58–62% humidity inside the jar. Burp twice a day for the first 3–4 days, then daily.
Curing time	At least 2 weeks. Longer is better.

The drying numbers are the ones I run today. The older article on my site lists a warmer, drier room; this is the range I’ve settled on since.

SECTION 01

When to harvest

Breeder timelines are a guess. The plant tells you when it’s done, in two places.

1. The stigmas (the hairs)

As the plant finishes, the white hairs on the buds turn burnt orange and curl back into the flower. Some growers wait for 90% to turn; others want all of them. Use it as the first signal, not the only one. Hairs change color for other reasons too, like being touched or a swing in humidity.

2. The trichomes (the frost)

This is the one that matters. Get a jeweler’s loupe, a handheld magnifier or a cheap digital microscope and look at the heads of the trichomes. Some people take a close-up photo with their phone and zoom in.

Trichome color	What it means
Clear	Not ready. Potency is still building.
Cloudy / milky	Peak. This is the target for most growers.
Amber	Past peak. The effect gets heavier and sleepier.

I aim for mostly cloudy with a few amber. Tops ripen before lowers, so check more than one spot. Some growers harvest the top of the plant first and give the lower buds another week.

The most common mistake on this whole list

Harvesting too early. I’ve done it myself. In those last weeks the flowers are still swelling and the plant is still putting on weight. Chop a week or two early and the buds never dense up the way they should have. Be patient. The calendar doesn’t know your plant.

SECTION 02

Trimming

Wet or dry, big leaves then small, clean scissors.

Wet trim or dry trim?

Both work. I trim after drying. Wet leaves stick to the scissors and make the job harder; dry leaves snap off clean.

How I do it

- Gloves on. Your hands will be covered in resin in ten minutes.
- Big fan leaves first. Scissors right at the base of the stem, cut.
- Then the small sugar leaves. How far you take these is up to you. Close to the base for a clean bag-appeal trim, or quicker and looser if it’s for you.
- Clean the blades when they gum up. The resin that builds up is what people call scissor hash.
- Keep the trim. It makes butter, oil or hash.

A medium plant takes four to six hours by hand. Plan for it. A trim tray with a screen catches what falls.

SECTION 03

Drying

Slow and cool. This is the biggest quality killer after the chop.

Cut whole plants or branches and hang them. I prefer hanging to racks: nothing flattens and you don't have to flip anything. Dark room, and these numbers:

Temperature	Humidity	Airflow	Time
60–68 °F (16–20 °C)	55–60%	Gentle movement in the room. No fan pointed at the flowers.	7–10 days, longer for big buds

Why slow

If the room is too warm, too dry, or there's a fan blowing on them, the outside of the bud dries in two days while the inside is still wet. You lose terpenes, the smoke gets harsh, and the cure can't fix it. I slow the dry down as much as I can without creating conditions for mold.

Done when

Buds feel a little crunchy on the outside and small branches snap instead of folding when you bend them. If they still bend, give it another day.

Leave them alone

Squeezing buds, pulling branches down to look, passing them around, moving them room to room. Every time you handle them, trichomes get knocked off. If the temperature, humidity and airflow are right there is no reason to check every few hours. Check once a day, hands off otherwise.

SECTION 04

Curing

Where the flavor comes from. Most people stop too soon.

- Cut the buds off the branches and put them in wide-mouth mason jars or a proper curing container with an airtight lid. Wide mouth so your hand fits.
- Fill the jar but don’t pack it. The buds shrink more from here.
- Put a small hygrometer in each jar so you’re not guessing.
- **First 3–4 days:** open the lids for about 20 minutes, twice a day. Shake the jar so buds don’t stick together. This is burping: moisture out, fresh air in.
- **After that:** burp once a day for at least two weeks.
- **Target: 58–62% humidity inside the jar.** Too high, burp more and take the buds out for a while if needed. Too low, they dried too far; a humidity pack can help a little but you can’t put the moisture back.

What the jar tells you

If the buds feel re-moistened every time you open the jar in the first days, the cure is working. If they smell off, like hay gone wrong or ammonia, they are too wet and mold is coming. Get them out and let them dry in the open before jarring again.

Storage

Cool, dark, sealed. Around 60–65 °F (16–18 °C) is good. You can go even lower, down to around 40 °F (4 °C), by storing in a refrigerator. Heat and light break down trichomes.

SECTION 05

The four mistakes, in order

If something went wrong, it’s almost always one of these.

Mistake	What it costs you	The fix
1. Harvesting too early	Density, weight, potency	Trichomes, not the calendar
2. Drying too fast	Terpenes, smooth smoke	60–68 °F (16–20 °C), 55–60%, no direct air, 7–10 days
3. Overhandling	Trichomes knocked off	Hands off. Check once a day.
4. Rushing the cure	Flavor, the last 20% of quality	Hygrometer in the jar, 58–62%, two weeks minimum

Harvest-day checklist

- Loupe or microscope checked on three buds, top and bottom
- Drying space ready: dark, 60–68 °F (16–20 °C), 55–60%, fan moving room air not bud air
- Hygrometer in the room and one per jar for later
- Gloves, trimmers, trim tray, a container for trim
- Jars with airtight lids, enough for the whole plant

Where to go next

- The light, environment and feeding numbers I run, in one place → mrgrowit.com/grow-pack
- The gear I actually use → mrgrowit.com/equipment
- The long versions on my site: when to harvest · dry and cure · trimming