

BEST IN CATEGORY

# Local medical marijuana dispensary honored



SHMUEL THALER — SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL

Construction of a greenhouse roof continues under a dramatic cloudscape July 10 at Santa Cruz Mountain Naturals' medical marijuana farm in the Soquel Hills. The farm grows for a collective that was honored by the High Times Medical Cannabis Cup for best sativa.

## Santa Cruz Mountain Naturals' cannabis wins first place again from magazine

Drugs

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**APTOS »** What started as a marijuana plant too poor in quality to sell on the shelves of Santa Cruz Mountain Naturals in 2011 morphed into an award winning cannabis at the 2014 High Times Medical Cannabis Cup.

Cracker Jack, a medical marijuana cannabis sold at the Aptos-based dispensary, won best sativa at the competition in Santa Rosa in June. The strain bested more than 40 other types to win in its category, said Colin Disheroon,

operator of the dispensary.

Cannabis sativa is a subspecies of marijuana with roots in areas near the equator in countries such as Colombia and Thailand.

The feat wasn't possible three years ago when the grower first brought the Cracker Jack to Disheroon. Then, it wasn't up to par, lacking density, size and smell that Disheroon sought for medical-grade marijuana.

"It wasn't even a good enough quality that we wanted to take it," Disheroon said.

The plant was turned away and the grower given a couple of



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Carly Freeman manicures marijuana buds at Santa Cruz Mountain Naturals.

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# Award

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pointers on how to make it better. The grower returned four times in the course of a year to show how much the product had improved until it was finally something that impressed Disheroon. The density of the bud had increased, the odor was more alluring and it had a taste that, after smoking, was better. The final result was a product that had a sweet but floral smell to it.

"If you could mix a pine tree with a cheddar slab and a mango, you might have the smell of what Cracker Jack is," Disheroon said.

He credits the grower for his dedication to the craft.

"You could have the best genetics (in a seed) in the world but if the grower doesn't know what they're doing, it's not going to show up to the party," he said, meaning it won't reach its full potential.

Cracker Jack's origins go beyond the commercial.

"This person's intention runs beyond just trying to grow good cannabis," he said. "It's a lifestyle for this person. He's a really inspirational person."

The San Lorenzo Valley man who grew the winning variety said the process is simple.

"I think just the care and then the processing and the way we do it," he said,



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Callis Chambliss trims the plants in the Santa Cruz Mountain Naturals garden.

adding that while it sounds complicated, the process involves a lot of meticulous care of the plants and natural ingredients. Some of the ingredients he uses to help the plants flourish are kelp from the ocean, fertilizer made from bat waste and fish hydrolysate, a liquid form of ground fish.

The grower added that his strain wasn't meant to be confused with another strain with the same name.

A cross of three strains — Northern Lights, G13 Haze and XJ-13 — Cracker Jack is the result of years of work.

But winning an award for medical cannabis was something he didn't imagine.

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— Colin Disheroon, dispensary operator

"I never dreamed of this," he said, laughing robustly. "They asked me if they could enter it in the cup and I was all, 'Of course. But why do you like mine?' and he said, 'At this time, it's the best I've got.'"

Though Disheroon said he might submit a few other strains for next year's competition, Cracker Jack is likely to stay around as a go-to submission.

"If you have a race car

that keeps winning, you might as well keep racing it," he said.

But neither Disheroon nor the grower are looking to retain the title in the years to come.

"I would hope at some point, we get a run for our money so that we get knocked down a place or two," Disheroon said. "That just means there are other growers out there that are doing it well."