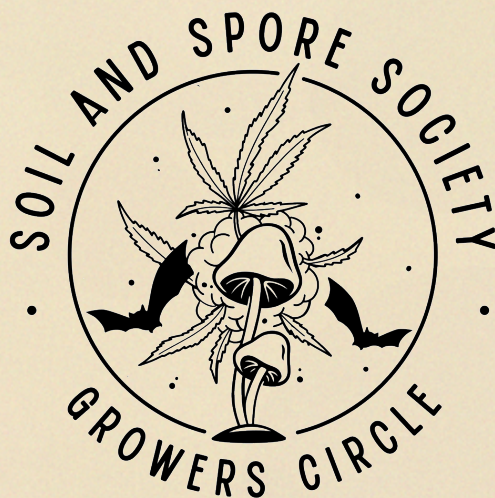




SOIL AND SPORE SOCIETY

HOW TO JUDGE FLOWER

A judge's handbook for people who grow with love.

The Circle's Judging Guide
Look close. Smell deep. Smoke slow. Write it down.

A Word Before You Begin

Judging flower is not about being snobby. It is about paying attention.

Every bud tells the story of how it was grown, dried, and cured. This guide teaches you to read that story the way competition judges do. At the big cups, from the Cannabis Cup to the Emerald Cup, judges score the same five things: how it looks, how it smells, how it tastes, how it was finished, and how it feels. You will learn all five here.

Take your time. Trust your senses. Write everything down. That is the whole secret.

Grown with love,

Marina

The 100 Point Scale

Every entry is scored out of 100 points, cup style. The points are split across five categories. This keeps your scoring honest. A pretty bud with no smell cannot hide. A harsh smoke cannot be saved by good looks.

Category	Worth	What you are scoring
Appearance and bag appeal	20	Structure, trichome coverage, color, pistils, trim quality.
Aroma	25	Dry flower smell, ground smell, complexity, intensity.
Flavor and smoke	25	Smoothness, flavor match to aroma, ash color, harshness.
Cure	15	Moisture, stem snap, no hay or chemical smell, even burn.
Effects	15	Onset, duration, and character of the experience.
Total	100	

Score each category on its own. Do not let a great smell rescue a bad cure. The numbers keep you fair.

Appearance and Bag Appeal • 20 Points

Look before you touch. This is the first impression, and in competition it matters.

- ◆ Structure. Note how the buds are built. Dense and well formed beats loose and leafy. Tight stacking shows the plant was grown strong and harvested at the right moment.
- ◆ Trichome coverage. Use a loupe if you have one. Great flower glitters. Look for milky, mushroom shaped heads on little stalks. Those are capitate stalked trichomes, and they carry the most aroma and flavor. Clear heads mean it was picked early. Amber heads mean it went a little long. Milky heads are the sweet spot.
- ◆ Color. Color should be rich and alive. Deep greens, purples, bright oranges. Brown, gray, or faded color is a warning sign of age, poor storage, or a rough dry.
- ◆ Pistils. The little hairs should look vibrant, not dull and crushed. They tell you the bud was handled with care.
- ◆ Trim quality. The trim should be tight and careful. Sugar leaves left clinging to the bud are lazy work and they burn harsh. A clean trim shows respect for the flower.

Score high for buds that make you reach for them. That pull is called bag appeal, and it is real.

Aroma • 25 Points

The nose knows. Aroma is the heaviest weighted category at the cups for a reason. Smell tells you almost everything about quality before you ever light up.

- ◆ Step one, the jar aroma. Crack the lid and breathe in. This is the first hello. Note how loud it is. Does it fill the room, or do you have to hunt for it.
- ◆ Step two, break it open. Snap a bud and smell the fresh break. Grinding or breaking releases a deeper layer. This is where the real profile lives. Judges always smell twice, dry and broken, because the second smell never lies.
- ◆ Complexity. Great flower shows three or more distinct notes. Citrus, gas, pine, berry, earth, spice, floral. One flat note is boring. Layers are the mark of a well grown plant.
- ◆ Intensity. The aroma should be strong and true to itself. Faint smell means lost terpenes, usually from a bad dry, old age, or poor storage.

Terpenes are the aromatic oils behind every smell and flavor. They are delicate. Heat, light, and time destroy them. Loud aroma means the grower protected them all the way to the jar.

Flavor and Smoke • 25 Points

This is where champions are made. A judge at the Cannabis Cup once said it plain: even if it looks good and smells good, if it does not taste right and burn right, it will not rise to the top.

- ◆ The dry pull. Taste the unlit joint first. This previews the flavor with no fire in the way.
- ◆ Flavor match. Does the taste match the aroma. That match is the mark of quality. If it smelled like citrus and tastes like nothing, points come off.
- ◆ Smoothness. Smoke should be smooth going down. Harshness that burns your throat or triggers hard coughing is a fault, not a sign of strength.
- ◆ The ash test. Watch the ash. White or light gray ash means a clean finish. Dark, hard, or black ash means the plant was fed too late and never finished clean. Old school judges swear by this and they are right to.
- ◆ The burn. The joint or bowl should burn even, all the way down. No canoeing down one side. No going out every two puffs. An even burn means even moisture and a proper cure.

Cure • 15 Points

The cure is where good flower becomes great flower. Drying and curing is a slow rest after harvest, usually two to eight weeks, that develops aroma and smoothness. Rush it and everything else suffers.

- ◆ The squeeze test. Pick up a bud and squeeze gently. It should give a little, then spring back. Sticky from resin is good. Wet from moisture is not.
- ◆ The stem snap. The classic test. Small stems should snap clean, not bend. Bend means too wet. Crumbling to dust means overdried.
- ◆ The hay check. Smell for hay or fresh cut grass. That smell means the cure was rushed and the green never broke down. Properly cured flower smells like itself, never like a barn.
- ◆ Proper range. Well cured flower rests at 58 to 62 percent humidity in the jar. That is the zone where aroma stays loud and buds stay alive.

Score high for flower that feels alive in your hand.

Effects • 15 Points

Last and most personal. Judge the experience the way you would describe a great evening to a friend. No medical claims, no promises. Just honest notes about the ride.

- ◆ Onset. Note when the effects begin. Fast or slow, write down what you feel and when.
- ◆ Character. Describe it in plain words. Clear or heavy. Talkative or quiet. Creative or sleepy. Bright or mellow. There is no right answer here, only honesty.
- ◆ Duration. Note how long it lasts and how it lands. A clean, gentle landing beats a hard crash.

One sample at a time. Never stack samples. You cannot judge the second flower if the first one is still talking. Wait until you are clear before moving on.

Score for how complete and enjoyable the experience feels, start to finish.

Running a Judging Session

Set up like a pro. The ritual matters as much as the scores.

- ◆ Number every entry. No names on the jars. No strain names where judges can see them. Judging is blind or it is not judging.
- ◆ One entry at a time. Judge each flower fully before moving to the next. This separates the effects so they never blur together.
- ◆ Fresh gear per sample. Use a clean pipe or fresh paper for every entry. Old resin ruins new flavor.
- ◆ Cleanse your palate. Keep water and plain crackers nearby. Sip and nibble between entries. Some judges also keep coffee beans to reset the nose between smells.
- ◆ Write it down immediately. Score the moment you finish each category. Memory lies. Paper does not.
- ◆ Take breaks. Tired noses and tired palates make bad calls. Step outside. Come back fresh.
- ◆ No talking during scoring. Other people's opinions bend your own. Compare notes after the sheets are in, not before.

The Defect Guide

Some faults dock points. Some end the run on the spot. Know the difference.

Disqualified, do not smoke

- ◆ Mold or mildew. White fuzz, gray webbing, or a musty basement smell. Do not smoke it. Throw it out.
- ◆ Bud rot. Brown or gray mushy spots inside the bud. Break suspicious buds open and look. Same rule. Do not smoke it.

Docked points

- ◆ Seeds. A few seeds are sloppy. A lot of seeds is a failed grow.
- ◆ Chemical taste. A harsh chemical bite means the plant was fed too late and never finished clean. Dock heavily.
- ◆ Harsh smoke. If it burns the throat, something went wrong in the grow, the dry, or the cure.
- ◆ Poor trim. Excess leaf burns harsh and tastes green. Lazy work costs points.
- ◆ Wet flower. Damp buds risk mold and smoke terribly. The stem snap never lies.
- ◆ Overdried flower. Buds that crumble to dust lost their aroma with their moisture.

When in doubt about mold, throw it out. No score is worth a bad call on safety.

Official Score Sheet

Print this page. One sheet per entry.

Entry number _____

Judge _____

Date _____

Round _____

Category	Worth	Your score
Appearance and bag appeal	20	
Aroma	25	
Flavor and smoke	25	
Cure	15	
Effects	15	
TOTAL	100	

Defects spotted: ☐ mold ☐ bud rot ☐ seeds ☐ chemical taste ☐ harsh smoke ☐ poor trim
☐ wet ☐ overdried

Notes

Would you crown it ☐ Yes ☐ No

The Judge's Glossary

Every circle has its own words. Here is what ours mean.

- ◆ Bag appeal. How good the flower looks in the bag. First impressions count.
- ◆ Terpenes. The aromatic oils that give each strain its smell and flavor. Delicate, and easily lost to heat, light, and time.
- ◆ Trichomes. The tiny crystal glands on the bud. Three kinds exist. Bulbous are the smallest. Capitate sessile sit flat on the surface. Capitate stalked are the tall, mushroom shaped ones, and they carry the most aroma and flavor.
- ◆ Pistils. The hairlike strands on the bud. They change color as the flower matures.
- ◆ Calyx. The small pod at the base of the flower. Swollen calyxes mean a well grown bud.
- ◆ Foxtailing. When buds grow in long spires instead of round stacks. Sometimes it is the genetics. Sometimes it is heat or light stress.
- ◆ Cure. The slow dry and rest after harvest that develops aroma and smoothness. Usually two to eight weeks in sealed jars.
- ◆ Flush. Giving the plant plain water at the end of the grow so it finishes clean. Judges check this in the ash.
- ◆ Dry pull. Tasting the unlit joint. A preview of the flavor before fire.
- ◆ Canoeing. When one side of the joint burns faster than the other. A sign of uneven moisture or a bad roll.
- ◆ Stem snap. The classic cure test. Small stems should snap clean, not bend.
- ◆ Hay smell. The grassy smell of a rushed cure. The green never broke down.
- ◆ Palate cleanser. Water or plain crackers between samples. Keeps your senses honest.
- ◆ Blind judging. Scoring without knowing the grower or the strain. No favorites.

Now Go Judge Something

That is the whole craft. Look close, smell deep, smoke slow, write it down.

The best judge is not the pickiest one. It is the most honest one. Score what is in front of you, not what you wish was in front of you. Respect every grower who put a jar on the table, because growing great flower is hard and you know it.

Run your own circle cup. Invite your growmies. Number the jars. Keep it blind. Crown a winner and mean it.

Grown with love,

Marina

Soil and Spore Society • A private growers' circle