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# 420 TIMES™

the magazine of medical marijuana and natural healing

## HOW LEGAL IS YOUR GARDEN?

Patients who grow for their own use may avoid  
scrutiny from two law enforcement agencies

### GROWTH INDUSTRY

Why raising your own medical  
cannabis is easier than ever

## GROW YOUR OWN GREEN

Part 1 of a cultivation series

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# WHERE DID "420" REALLY COME FROM?

Sifting Through Mists Of Myth  
To Sleuth The Truth *by Dean Christopher*

**You're reading The 420 Times. So it's a safe bet that you know what "420" means. Yes, it refers to reefer. This magazine focuses on medicinal, not recreational, cannabis. But for decades "420" has been a code word for weed in general.**

The term first appeared in the early '70s. And yet its origin remains cloaked in mystery, legend, urban myth, misinformation, occasionally even outright weirdness. Literally thousands of articles, celebrity anecdotes, blog entries, media commentaries – even books – have dealt with the issue. And still the myths persist!

So let's take a moment to – so to speak – blow away the smoke, and bring some clarity to The 420 Question. Let's start with what "420" is not:

420 is not a police radio code calling officers to some "pot in progress" location. In California, a 420 offense refers to unlawful obstruction of access to public land. In case you're keeping score, the Health and Safety Code that deals with controlled substances (including, but not specifically, marijuana) is #11350.

420 is not a Penal Code number. Many states do have a code #420, but we couldn't find any that relate to cannabis, recreational or medical. (India has a Penal Code 420, which deals with bilking people out of property or money. That same code also applies to fraud in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan.)

4/20 (April 20th) is not the "best day to plant cannabis." Please. To limit agriculture to one "best day" is preposterous! Planting seasons vary with location, soil composition, rainfall, etc., so the very idea is wildly illogical. Would you claim that October 20th is the "best day" to plant cannabis in Argentina, an equivalent temperate climate south of the Equator?

420 is not the total of chemical elements in cannabis. Nor is it number of molecules in THC, or any such nonsense. Cannabis consists of roughly 315 components, depending on variety.

420 is not "tea time in Holland." Wait. Why Holland? The idea makes no sense, despite the enlightened Dutch attitude regarding ingestion of coffee, tea, cannabis, whatever. For one thing, 4:20 P.M. in Europe is usually expressed as "1620".

4/20 (in 1943) is not the date of the first "acid trip." But even if it were, what does that have to do with marijuana? Let's keep our substances straight. According to lab notes kept by the pioneering Swiss chemist Albert Hofmann, he first dipped into LSD on 4/16/43. By coincidence, it apparently was at about twenty after four that afternoon. Hey, even anecdotal clocks get it right sometimes.

420 does not imitate the "dangle" of a Rastafarian doobie. This loopy idea holds that – seen from the side – the joint hangs down at an angle analogous to the position of 4:20 on a

clock's face. But even if this were remotely sane, it would hold true only for the right profile. The left face would represent 7:40 (twenty to eight).

Many myths involve Jerry Garcia and The Grateful Dead. To wit:

The Grateful Dead did not "always stay in room 420" in hotels when on tour. For one thing, grown men prefer their own individual rooms. For another, several people involved with the band have debunked the idea as ludicrous.

420 was not the street address of the "Dead's" office in San Francisco. Some fans spread the word that Jerry Garcia and the band were headquartered at 420 Ashbury. At one point in the mid-60s the band's business office was, in fact, located at 710 Ashbury. The Deadheads were only three blocks off. Not bad for stoners.

4:20 was not the exact time of Garcia's passing. According to reliable media sources, his body was discovered on August 9, 1995 at 4:23 A.M. For him to have died at 4:20, the discovery would have to have been made exactly three minutes after his demise. Please return to Planet Earth. What are the odds of this happening?

### The Date Nuts

Legend often links April 20th with the supposed births or deaths of pop culture icons – usually those considered enthusiastic inhalers. Most frequently mentioned, besides Garcia: Tommy Chong, Jimi Hendrix, Bob Marley, Janis Joplin, Jim Morrison.

None of the above was either born or died on 4/20. None.

One persistent legend is that cannabis activist Tommy Chong was born at 4:20 (AM or PM – your choice) on April 20. But Tommy says he was born on May 24, 1938, although he has no clear recollection of the time. His birth certificate is unavailable for checking. This raises the question: how could others know the exact hour and minute if he doesn't?

Let's consider some random celebrities – not linked with weed – who were, in fact, born on April 20th. In no particular order: Comedian Steven Colbert; Sex symbol Carmen Electra; Jazz man Lionel Hampton; Painter Joan Miró;

Genocidal maniac Adolf Hitler; Salsa king Tito Puente; Actress Jessica Lange; Emperor Napoleon III of France. Among those deceased on a 4/20: Ventriloquist Señor Wences; Mexican comedian Cantinflas; British funnyman Benny Hill; Poet and Librarian of Congress Archibald MacLeish; Novelist Bram Stoker (Dracula) and that gifted wig-head, Composer George Frederick Handel. Now – what was your point about April 20th?

### Where's Waldo?

Here's the real story. The expression 420, used as we understand it today, springs from an informal (and youthful) weed-smoking society at a high school in San Rafael, California circa 1971. They called themselves the Waldos, because they liked to meet at a wall (wall + doobie?) near school for a smoke at 4:20, clustered around a statue of Louis Pasteur, the eminent French microbiologist who invented "pasteurization" – but who is not known to have used cannabis in any form.

Even in the days before "viral marketing," the password "420 Louie" spread like, um, wildfire throughout the cannabis community. The original Waldos (now bordering on genteel middle age) report repeatedly encountering their expression – soon slimmed down to simply "420" – in many places very far from San Rafael.

And now we're using it, and so are you. Hats off to the Waldos!

Now we invite our readers to submit their own imaginative "solutions" to the mystery of "Where '420' Came From" – in case the Waldo story wasn't convincing enough!

Just e-mail your submissions to [info@the420times.com](mailto:info@the420times.com). We'll publish the silliest in a forthcoming issue.