Hops: Humulus lupulus

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Description automatically generated

Uses:

* Brewing beer
* Privacy screen
* In the past: as a sedative and in elixirs

About hops:

* They are technically bines, not vines. Vines use tendrils to provide support, and bines use sharp hairs on their stems to climb.
* Cold tolerant
* Perennial plant
* Female cones are used in beer, not male cones. The male cones are 5 petaled flowers. You can cut back the male cones.
* You can propagate hops from fresh stem cuttings and rootstocks with rhizomes if you want to plant more
* They are actually good for chickens to eat!
* Many different varieties, such as Cascade, Centennial, Chinook, Galena, Magnum, Mt. Hood, Nugget, Willamette, and Zeus.

Best growing conditions:

* Full sun, but can grow in partly sunny areas
* Fertile, well-drained soil with a pH between 6-6.5. Can top dress with compost in the spring/summer or add supplemental nitrogen if needed.

Best practices:

* Pruning: When it starts to emerge in the spring, cut back all but about 3 of the healthiest canes. To prevent tangling, cut some of the new shoots as they emerge during the summer. (Between 2018-2021, we never pruned and our hops grew fine, but maybe they would grow better if we pruned them.)
* Trellis: They can reach heights of 30-40 feet. Give them something to grow on! The hops at the Gibbs House are currently along the fencing in the food forest. Other people have used twine or just walls to allow hops to grow up.
* Preventing common diseases and pests: Powdery mildew is the most common disease and aphids are the most common pest. Can be prevented by keeping good air flow (by pruning) and not overwatering.
* Sometimes the leaves can cause irritation, so wear gloves when working with hops.
* Harvesting in late August or early to mid-September.
* Once harvested (which we do not usually do), they can be dried in a cool dry location. This can take weeks and is not done until they are brittle.
* Could also save them in vacuum sealed bags and put them in the freezer.

Contact people who want to use the hops! We gave them away to the Sustainable Brewing Department at KVCC early September 2020 and 2021. Make sure to reach out to them by the first week in August! There is also a contact at WMU if the KVCC people are unavailable:

* KVCC: [blindberg@kvcc.edu](mailto:blindberg@kvcc.edu) and [aross@kvcc.edu](mailto:aross@kvcc.edu)
* There is also a contact form you can fill out to KVCC’s Sustainable Food Systems if these people are no longer working for KVCC: <https://kalamazoovalley.secure.force.com/form/?formid=217739>
* WMU: [steven.bertman@wmich.edu](mailto:steven.bertman@wmich.edu)
* There is also a contact form you can fill out to WMU’s Sustainable Brewing Department: <https://wmich.edu/brewing/contact>

Sources:

<https://www.gulleygreenhouse.com/growing-hop-vines/>

<https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/edible/vegetables/hops/growing-hops-plants.htm>

<https://www.homebrewersassociation.org/how-to-brew/how-to-harvest-prepare-and-store-homegrown-hops/>

Mpanga, Isaac & Schalau, Jeff. (2020). Hop Production in Northern Arizona: Opportunity and Challenges for Small-scale Growers?