

The Knightly News



HARVEST
A GREAT BEER THIS FALL!

From the Prez:



Knights:
Another month has quickly slipped by us. The days are shorter and we're finally out of the 100's! Whew, I never thought that the AC at the house would survive!! I say a prayer and make a small sacrifice

to the small appliance gods (who just recently acquired dominance over heating and air conditioning systems).

The change in seasons means a change in brewing tactics for many of us. No longer do we have to worry about fermenting at excessive temperatures and everything coming out tasting like banana or fruits -with no offense toward our banana beer brewers. It also means that the Bluebonnet is just around the corner, and its time to formulate and brew your favorite big beers for competition. You may laugh – because we've all taste good 4 month old barleywines – but those extra hours you thought you had reserved for brewing will soon be crowded out by a house full of relatives and endless weekends at the malls looking for that “perfect” Christmas gift. Laugh now, and come January 1st I'll ask what you've brewed.

We started out the month with a brew in at my house – which should officially become “Black Dog Brewery”, or perhaps “Brouwerij Woogie” since so many Belgian styles are being produced. Seems like that is turning into a monthly ritual – which really isn't a bad thing. Let's see the journal says that we brewed August 6th, September 5th and again just last weekend, October 1st. And I still don't have enough beer in the keg!

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Growing Hops in North Texas

by Sir Richard Graham

One of the things I like about being a home-brewer is that I can experiment with all aspects of the brewing process. One way I have tried to expand upon the brewer's art is by growing my own hops. While not a hop producing region, I have found that with a little patience and a lot of care, hops can be successfully grown in North Texas.

Obviously, the primary goal of growing your own hops is the harvest of the hop cones to use in brewing your beer. A secondary benefit can be esthetic as the hop plants provide greenery and shade. They also become a great conversation piece.

The hop (*Humulus Lupulus*) is a perennial plant that produces bines (vines) that grow 12 to 20 feet in height. The plants are started from a section of the root called a rhizome which produces the shoots and roots. The shoots develop into the hop bines from where the hop flowers (cones) are produced

While hops are traditionally grown in cooler, moister climates, they can grow just about anywhere. This summer I saw hop vines growing at Monticello, Thomas Jefferson's home in Virginia. A large portion of commercial U.S. hops come from the semi-arid Yakima Valley in the state of Washington. This does not mean that growing hops in North Texas is without its challenges.



From the Prez:

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Granted, the carboys are all full, there's just no beer in the kegs!

October also marked the one year anniversary celebration for our favorite local brewery – Rahr's. Fritz hosted a Saturday afternoon party at the brewery, complete with a band and Bar-B-Que... and about 400+ of his closest friends! The celebration also officially introduced a seasonal beer – the Pecker Wrecker – a well hopped Imperial Pilsner. The beer lines were long, and eventually Gene and I helped out with a couple of Fritz's brewing pitchers.

In addition to great beer and brats, the band is worth mentioning as well. A relatively new group, lead by Maren Morris of Grand Prairie. She has a powerful and well seasoned voice, and the fur on my arms stood on end when I heard her belt out a version of John Prine's Angel from Montgomery! She appeared very comfortable in front of the microphone, belting out songs – even though she's only 15! Wow! That's a lot of talent in a young gal! Her T-shirts had the phrase "Est 1991", and it didn't take long to figure out that that wasn't the band's "born on" date!

The festivities were cut short at 3:00, and I'm certain that this crowd could have gone all night! In fact, it probably did, as many people headed to the Saucer in downtown Fort Worth. A couple cold pints there then it was off for dinner.

After a quick bite at Risky's BBQ, everyone was headed down to Billy Bob's to catch up with Fritz and continue the celebration. Unfortunately, those darn seasonal allergy things had knocked me down for the evening, and I headed home early. Yes, they did have fun, and yes, they did have the picture to prove it!

October also means planning for the 2006 Bluebonnet is in full swing. I'm not kidding about the months of November and December disappearing into a black hole – you just wait, blink and it will be January! The planning committee

meets on the last Sunday of each month – with the exception of December. Even though the "old guard" has a flawless system for organizing and pulling off the biggest homebrew event in the nation (ok, ok ... so we swap back and forth with the Dixie Cup) it is still a monstrous event and takes a lot of manpower to turn the wheels. The September meeting was held at Big Bucks, and I'm proud to say that the Knights were well represented there!

We've got a lot of great events coming up, and many more we don't even know about yet! Keep the stainless clean and busy!

-- Sir Brad Berven

Diary of a Mad Scientist: The Musings of Jim Wright

Beer or western style (German) lager beer is very popular in China but drinking is not done every day. I have not seen any indigenous style available commercially, but maybe I do not know where to look. TsingTou is popular as is Snow and YinYang beer. Pabst was noticeable on the shelves as is Pabst Stout. I believe all of these are produced in China. The Chinese will frequently bring their beer with them if they intend to drink in a restaurant as the price in the store may be 2 yuan and in the restaurant 15 to 20 yuan (1 yuan equals about 12.5 cents). There does not seem to be a problem with this. Though with normal Chinese income the 2 yuan prohibits every day drinking. Chinese will drink beer as a session drink.

Wine (western style wine) though made in China does not appear to have a large or really growing following. Though cheaper in an absolute sense from wine in America it is relatively expensive to Chinese and appears generally generic and not made for top quality. The Chinese do not appear to be interested in developing a palate for western style wine. Very popular is BaiJiu, an indigenous liquor which varies from 45 to 70 percent and may have a

Grow Your Own Hops

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Without question the greatest challenge to growing anything in North Texas are the hot summers. Secondly, hops are susceptible to fungus and mildew which can be a significant problem in this area. Finally, insects can also pose a problem, but to a lesser degree.

The first step in growing hops is to select and prepare the growing site. The site must allow the vines to grow to near their maximum height. An arbor or tall trellis is ideal, but the side of a building or even a tall pole will suffice. Hops require a lot of sun. The hop bed will need to receive at least a half a day of full sun.

Hop plants grow best in a moist, well drained soil containing a lot of organic matter. If your soil is mostly clay, it will need to be broken down with the addition of sand and organic material. Clay alone will not hold water at the surface and will dry out during the summer.

After choosing the site and preparing the soil, the future hop farmer must select his hops. American varieties such as Cascade or Willamette seem to do better in this area. I would not recommend any of the noble hops as a first time growing endeavor. Rhizomes can be mail ordered or the local homebrew stores sometimes take orders for early spring delivery. After receiving your rhizomes, they can be refrigerated until it is time to plant.

Once all threats of frost are past, the soil can be cultivated, mulched, and fertilized. Do not be stingy with the fertilizer as hops like a lot of food. I use a common lawn fertilizer on my hops, but any fertilizer will do as long as it contains a lot of nitrogen and phosphorous. I fertilize at least three times a year

Plant the rhizomes about two inches deep in a hill about two feet in diameter. Water well and keep the soil moist. As the vines begin to grow add mulch around the plant to help retain moisture

and keep weeds down. Once the shoots have broken the surface and grown five or six inches, pick the strongest looking three or four vines and cut the rest off. Having already pre-strung the twine on which the vines will grow, gently wrap them around the string and they will do the rest.

I have not had a lot of trouble with plant diseases as I usually spray the hops several times during the summer as I spray other plants in the yard such as roses and grapes. Insects do like the young, tender hop leaves, so I spray as needed for bug control.

Mad Scientist....

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banana aroma and taste (due to fermentation conditions). I would say it is like a low quality vodka, but I think Chinese drink it with intent of getting drunk with friends. It is relatively expensive for Chinese but it would be drunk at get togethers with friends, toasting "gangbi" and drinking the glass in one drink.

On Saturday night a group of Shan Shan's friends (her cousin (a doctor) and three of Shan Shan's girlfriends) had dinner at a restaurant. Shan Shan brought 1 bottle of BaiJiu (42 percent), 1 bottle white wine, and 4 cans of Tsingtau beer (and a 2 liter bottle of coke). Everybody started with some BaiJiu before food was brought out. As food was brought out Shan Shan and her cousin continued with BaiJiu, but I and one of Shan Shan's girlfriends switched to beer and the other 2 switched to coke.

Shan Shan's cousin put food on others plates but not his own and continued to drink BaiJiu. Shan Shan was not drinking as fast as her cousin but kept toasting with him bottoms up. Shan Shan was also having some beer at this point and all of her girlfriends has switched to coke. I was continuing with beer but did have some additional BaiJiu. By mid-meal the BaiJiu ran out and Shan Shan's cousin began to look furtively around the table for undrunk BaiJiu, which there was none to be had. I opened the bottle of wine to make up for the deficiency. It was a neutral non-distinguished generic white of 11- 1/2 percent (resembling a strong non-carbonated cider). Everybody

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As the vines reach the top of their climb, they will begin to flower and put out side shoots which intertwine and produce more flowers. As the cones mature, they will become fuller and the hop glands will develop. When the cone is lightly squeezed and it returns to its original shape, then it is ready to harvest. An advantage for homebrewers over commercial growers is the ability to harvest several times during the year. Multiple harvesting also encourages additional cone development. In a good year, I have gotten up to two pounds of hops off three plants.

After the hops have been harvested, they must be dried prior to storing. The easiest method I have found is to place the cones on a screen and allow them to dry naturally. A window screen will work, but I have made a square wooden frame with a screen bottom. By placing the hops on the screen in a hot, dry place like an attic or garage, they will dry out in a day or two. The hops are then placed in freezer bags and frozen until needed.

There is one significant disadvantage of using homegrown hops. This is not knowing the hops bitterness or their alpha acid percentage. If willing to pay the cost, the backyard hop grower can have the hops professionally analyzed. Alternatively, you can experiment with a batch or two and estimate the hop bitterness. Personally, I use my hops primarily for flavor and aroma where the alpha acids are not as critical.

In late summer, it is time to prepare the plants for winter. The vines should be trimmed back to 3 or 4 feet above the ground to promote additional root development. After the first freeze, the vines then should be cut to just above ground level and covered with several inches of mulch to protect the roots from freezing during the winter.

If you enjoy gardening and experimenting with your brewing, growing your own hops can be a rewarding adjunct to the brewing process. Cheers!

Mad Scientist....

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had some, but it did not have the kick of BaiJiu. Shan Shan's cousin had to make due.

Though the meal Shan Shan had a running argument with the waitress arguing one of the dishes was not right and wanting the bill cut (Chinese seem to always want to negotiate, I think Shan Shan must have running arguments with 1/2 the restaurants in Tianjin a city of 10 million). As we ran out of food and drink things the restaurant partly gave into Shan Shan's demands. During this there was some singing and everybody had a good time.

Shan Shan's cousin and friends bicycled home at the end of the evening. Shan Shan having come closest to trying to keep up with her cousin drinking BaiJiu, beer, and wine (to her cousin's BaiJiu (though he drank at least half the total BaiJiu) and wine only) complained of being dizzy and headache the next day. I told her she had a hangover, she disagreed, "No, high blood pressure". Her blood pressure was 120/80, hmm.

**References for Grow Your own Hops:**

D'Luzansky, "In the Back Yard, a Gardener's Guide to Homegrown Hops", Zymurgy, Volume 20, Number 4, summer 1997.

Fisher, "How to Grow Your Own Hops", Brew Your Own Magazine, Volume 7, Number 4, April 2000



Mission Statement

The mission of the Knights of the Brown Bottle and this newsletter is to serve as a forum to promote public awareness and appreciation of the quality and variety of homebrewed beer through the collection and dissemination of information regarding the art and science of homebrewing, and to promote the responsible use of beer as an alcohol - containing beverage. The club newsletter is published monthly and highlights the events and meetings of the club, local beer events and technical information that will help everyone brew better beer. Items for publication are welcomed and encouraged. The deadline is the last Friday of the month, for the following months newsletter. Items should be directed to Chris Owen
 E-Mail : ludichris@comcast.net

**KNIGHTS OF THE BROWN BOTTLE
 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FOR 2005**

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Please forward information to Richard Turner, Secretary, KOB. (don't forget to let us know if it changes)



**Relax
 Don't Worry
 Have A Home-
 brew!**