

# Cannabis Beauty

Why this little green plant is suddenly white hot

By **Sandra Ramani**



Gone are the days when “hemp products” referred to oils and seeds relegated to a back shelf of the health food store, or rough-fiber clothing sold in a farmers market stall. As increased awareness of the health benefits of cannabis has led to more states legalizing medicinal marijuana (and decriminalizing recreational usage), consumers are seeking out the “miracle plant” in all aspects of their lives. From cannabis oil-infused honeys, snacks and chocolates billed as “brain food” to skincare, this potent green ingredient is suddenly white hot.

“Industrial hemp has been used in protein powders, nutritional oils and clothing for many years,” notes Myra Mesko, founder of the Botanical Rush cannabis skincare line (and before that, MyChelle Dermaceuticals). But now, she continues, “the abundance of research into hemp’s benefits, consumer education and better methods of extraction” have taken the plant to another level—and inspired healers like herself to develop entire collections around it.

Stephen Letourneau, a partner in the Cannuka line, is equally enthusiastic. “Cannabis is everywhere in skincare, as it has a myriad of benefits for the body,” he says. “It’s a genius of a plant; its forms and benefits can vary, depending on what you are looking for.”

For many consumers, though, questions still linger about the use of this perhaps controversial—or at least, misunderstood—crop. We asked experts about how best to use it, and why it might be right for you.

✿ **What’s the difference between cannabis, hemp and marijuana?** Cannabis is the name of the plant from which both hemp and marijuana are derived. However, these are two very different products. Marijuana contains about 15 to 25 percent THC, or Tetrahydrocannabinol—an active ingredient that causes a psychoactive effect (a.k.a., a high). Hemp, meanwhile, has less than 0.3 percent THC, and the hemp oil and the cannabinoids that come from hemp—both used in consumer cannabis products—often contain no THC at all.

✿ **What are cannabinoids?** Cannabinoids—commonly called CBDs—are the nearly 100 naturally occurring antioxidants and neuroprotectants found in hemp (and, to a lesser extent, in marijuana). They are the basis for the benefits of cannabis products, as CBDs attach themselves to the receptors within our body’s already-present endocannabinoid system, which spans across our nervous system, GI tracts and almost every cell (including skin cells), and is responsible for keeping the body in balance. The compounds inside CBDs fit perfectly into our cell receptors to help regulate imbalances.

Medical marijuana and other regulated products contain both CBDs and THC, and the levels of both in many medicinal products are now being engineered to target specific ailments and symptoms. The CBDs extracted from hemp, though—these are used in skincare—are THC-free.

✿ **Are these products legal?** Yes. CBDs from industrial or food-grade hemp (what's used in beauty products like creams, salves and lip balms) are not listed under the Controlled Substances Act, and are legal in all 50 states. While these are free from THC (the “drug” part of cannabis), some states also allow CBD products with low amounts of THC for targeted pain relief, so double check the label, or your local laws, before purchasing those. As a rule, look for formulations with a high amount of CBDs in relation to the total volume of the product.

✿ **What are the benefits?** Hemp is one of the richest plant-based sources of Omega-3 and Omega-6, and vitamins A, B, D and E, which means that products with hemp oil provide excellent hydration, nourishment and protection for the skin. Meanwhile, CBDs are a potent anti-inflammatory and antiseptic, have a positive effect on the immune system, and can be easily absorbed into the skin. They're effective to treat everything from puffiness and dark circles to skin irritations, itching and sunburn.

And there's more. “What excites me enormously is the research recently published in the *Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology*, concluding that cannabinoids are effective against symptoms of psoriasis, eczema, dermatitis, inflammatory skin diseases and, in some cases, even skin cancer,” says Mesko. Letourneau adds that because CBDs can also “inhibit both lipogenic action (the way the body converts energy to fat for storage) and the production of sebocytes (cells in the sebaceous glands which produce oil), a study by the *Journal of Clinical Investigation* and the National Institute on Health found that CBDs have “the ability to reduce sebum and, in the process, suppress acne itself.”

There are also the calming benefits more commonly associated with marijuana: Even without THC, CBD oils can help reduce stress, ease anxiety, provide pain relief and help improve sleep. But for some, it's all about the visible results. “My consumers are seeing radiant, balanced, nourished skin, and even getting compliments on their glow,” says Mesko.

✿ **Will I get high?** Nope. “Topical applications do not penetrate the blood stream, so even if there was a miniscule amount of THC present, there would be no fear of positive blood tests for THC,” notes Mesko. The only thing that will have you flying high is the feel of healthy, nourished skin.

## The Miracle Plant

For reaping the benefits of cannabis-infused products, here are a few of our favorites.

### Cannuka

CBD isolate from hemp and antimicrobial Manuka honey from New Zealand combine to provide relief for a variety of skin issues. Hydrating Skin Balm offers intense healing for cracked hands (and can be used at night as a mask), the Calming Eye Balm helps reduce puffiness and dark circles. [cannuka.com](http://cannuka.com)

### CW Hemp

Known for their pioneering work in the industrial hemp and medical cannabis industries, the Stanley Brothers have also been called the “Robin Hoods” of medical marijuana for their dedication to growing and developing hemp genetics that are affordable for those who need it most. The brothers named a strain of hemp “Charlotte's Web” after a beloved client, a young girl named Charlotte, who had a rare seizure disease, and the company became CW Hemp, or Charlotte's Web. [cwhemp.com](http://cwhemp.com)

### Mad Hippie

Made with hemp seed extract and 18 other goodies—including goji, camu camu and argan oil—the Mad Hippie Antioxidant Facial Oil deeply nourishes the skin, fights the signs of aging, and protects against sun damage and photoaging. [madhippie.com](http://madhippie.com)

### Cannabliss

The lightweight Moisturizing Face Lotion helps restore the skin and prevent the signs of aging, while the Revitalizing Serum works to firm, brighten and even tone. The Hemp Salve eases muscle and joint pain, and is available in a starter kit with small sizes of three products. [cannablissorganic.com](http://cannablissorganic.com)

### Botanical Rush

Created by the founder and former owner of MyChelle Dermaceuticals, most products are made with organic full-spectrum CBDs and hemp oil, and a mix of peptides, plant stem cells, vitamin C, botanical extracts, essential oils and more. The Midnight Beauty anti-aging cream, Beautiful Eye Cream and Divine Beauty Oil feature organic hemp compounds and more. [botanicalrush.com](http://botanicalrush.com)

### Jersey Shore Cosmetics

The Super Sativa Medicinal Hydrating Balm, made with cannabis seed oil, cocoa butter, coconut oil, and natural menthol, helps soothe dry lips and also features the natural, drug-free benefits of cannabis oil, like stress relief and improved sleep. The Super Sativa Arnica Cream, made with cannabis seed oil, arnica oil extract, white lotus, chamomile and more soothes sprains, bruising, and muscle aches. [jerseyshorecosmetics.com](http://jerseyshorecosmetics.com)