Hemp Encyclopedia Article

Hemp

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Hemp

In the narrow sense, hemp refers to a fiber derived from certain strains of CANNABIS SATIVA, a bushy herb that originated in ASIA. In the broader sense, it also denotes the other use of the plant, as a source of MARIJUANA. Although *Cannabis sativa* is generally considered to be a single species, two genetic strains show considerable differences. One is used for fiber production and has been so used for centuries to make rope, floor coverings, and cloth. Hemp plants have been grown for this purpose as commercial crops in Asia and even in colonial America; during World War II, they were grown in the midwestern United States when the Asian supply was unavailable.

Figure 1 *Hemp Plant*

The other strain of the hemp plant produces a poor fiber but has a relatively high drug content; it is used for its PSYCHOACTIVE effect. Near the end of the nineteenth century, the Indian Hemp Drug Commission (1895) produced one of the first major assessments of *Cannabis* as a drug, finding it not a major health hazard. Consequently, it remains in legal use in India for both medicinal and social purposes, where it is called BHANG.

See Also

Plants, Drugs From)