

Cannabis has come a long way since the days when consumers had to sift through leaves, twigs, and seeds to determine which of the ten plus strains was the best. The choices were limited to high, really high, and completely couch-locked.

Today there are an estimated [2000 strains](#), each with a unique cannabinoid and terpene profile. In the legal market, we have so much more information about the strains readily available to us.

But many people still visit their local dispensaries, looking solely at the THC content, believing that the higher the THC, the more likely it is to fix whatever ails them.

Limiting your search to THC only, you may be missing some profound benefits from the terpenes typically found in the cannabis plant. With a bit more information about terpenes, you will be better prepared to pick the strains that best improve your mental and physical well-being.

What's a Terpene?

If you've ever looked at a bud closely, you likely noticed that it's covered in tiny little crystals. These crystals, called trichomes, produce a scent to protect cannabis plants from natural predators. The aromas created by terpenes make them unpalatable to the insects that might otherwise eat the plant.

Terpenes are also prevalent in many herbs and spices, and they produce the aromas present in essential oils. Combined with the THC (and other [cannabinoids](#)) in cannabis plants, terpenes produce the varying effects your mind and body experience when you consume it. Out of the estimated 55,000 terpenes produced in nature, more than 100 have been identified in the cannabis plant *so far*.

But like the other lesser-known [cannabinoids present](#) in cannabis, terpenes have even more significance than determining how high you feel. The National Institutes of Health has, to date, spent over [\\$100 million on cannabis research](#). The [outcomes are promising](#). Although the most common uses for cannabis are to reduce pain and inflammation, there are many other indications cannabis can help with, and terpenes play a huge role.

The studies have shown that cannabis has the ability to [shrink tumors](#), [regulate serotonin levels](#), minimize the tremors associated with [Parkinson's Disease](#), open up [airway passages in the lungs](#), [help with anxiety](#), and more. Of course, that isn't an exhaustive list; the benefits are myriad and are still being discovered. What we know is that terpenes act on our endocannabinoid systems in very nuanced ways.

Terpenes and the Endocannabinoid System

All living creatures—human beings included—have an [endocannabinoid system](#). Scientists are just learning to crawl when it comes to uncovering the truth about our mysterious endocannabinoid system.

While there is little precise information about its mechanisms, we know that no two people have an identical response to a specific cannabinoid profile, leading researchers to believe our endocannabinoid systems are unique. Of course, if you are a researcher, that is intriguing, but as a cannabis consumer, it can leave you with some experimentation to find the strain that works best for you.

How can consumers use that information to buy a better weed to fit their specific symptoms? A complete understanding of the endocannabinoid system and how the various compounds found in weed act in our bodies may be a ways off. But the more knowledge we have about plant medicine, the more we can zero in on the perfect strain(s) to treat our ailments. Let's take a closer look at the eight most common terpenes found in cannabis and how they can affect your health.

1. Limonene

Limonene has a citrusy scent, although it can also have hints of peppermint and juniper. Found in a wide variety of trees and the rinds of citrus plants, limonene is often used as a flavoring or scent. It has known medicinal effects, and people have used it to help treat cancer, fungal infection, depression, anxiety, gastrointestinal reflux, and produce weight loss.

2. Linalool

Linalool's scents are floral, spicy, and citrus. This terpene is found in many plants, including jasmine, lavender, basil, and thyme. Lavender essential oil is a well-known stress reliever. The terpene is also known to treat insomnia, chronic pain, depression, anxiety, and convulsions.

3. Myrcene

Myrcene has the scent of Cloves, Herbs, Woods, Musk, and Citrus. Myrcene is abundant in nature and is found in plants like hops, lemongrass, and thyme. It is known for its positive effects on inflammation; and is also an effective antiseptic, antibacterial and antifungal.

4. Caryophyllene

Caryophyllene has a peppery, spicy, woody scent. This terpene is found in cloves, hops, basil, pepper and oregano, and has potent anti-inflammatory and antioxidant effects. It is also quite effective for muscle spasms, chronic pain and insomnia.

5. Pinene

Like its name, pinene has a sweet piney scent. It is found in cedar, conifer, basil, eucalyptus and dill. Pinene has been used to treat anxiety, chronic pain, inflammation, and memory impairment. It is also a potent bronchodilator.

6. Humulene

Humulene's scent is earthy and woody. Found in hops, sage, and ginger, it's little wonder its effects include pain relief and reduced inflammation. It also had antibacterial properties.

7. Ocimene

Ocimene has a sweet, woody, and herbal scent. This terpene can be found in mint, parsley, and tarragon and is known for its decongestant, expectorant, antifungal, and antiviral properties.

8. Terpinolene

Terpinolene's scent is herbal, floral, and piney. Found in apple trees, tea trees, sage rosemary, and conifer, this terpene is thought to treat pain and cancer. It is also used as an antioxidant, antibacterial, antifungal, and sedative.

What to Look For in Terpenes

Cannabis is a nuanced plant, and terpenes are only one of the important variables to consider. Each plant has its unique chemical fingerprint, even within the same strain, which means that the best way to know what's in the plant is to test the batch specifically. Unfortunately, that isn't the norm in the cannabis industry, and finding a dispensary that provides that information may not be within reach for all consumers. THC content is the only available information at many dispensaries, while others have a complete terpene profile for each plant. Of course, if you are lucky enough to live in a state like Massachusetts, where all batches are required to get tested, you are all set.

For the rest of us, it's a bit more challenging, and many of us go with the available information, a visible inspection, and a quick whiff before deciding. But in the age of information, you don't have to settle for whatever data the dispensary wishes to share with you. Though the information available online can't possibly reflect what's actually in the plant you are buying, it gives you a rough enough idea to make some educated guesses and form a jumping-off point for your experimentations.

Beyond terpenes, you can also consider other cannabinoids like CBC, CBG, and CBN when making your purchase. Until we have more information from researchers (and it may be a while since federal prohibition makes experimentation difficult), the best way to figure out what works best for you is to keep track of what you consume, the cannabinoid profile, and how you are feeling. With a bit of experimentation, you should be able to find something that works for you in no time at all, and as a bonus, you can enjoy the ride to your perfect strain. Over time, you should be able to choose strains based on the entire plant profile and make a reasonable assumption that certain strains may work for you.

This is an article I ghostwrote for [Green Entrepreneur](#).