



Hemp Related Crimes



MEDIA RELATIONS

Hemp Farms are on the Rise in Fresno County and Crooks are Mistaking Plants for Marijuana



Adult Hemp Plants



Hemp Farm Signage

A new trend in Fresno County has farmers using land to grow legal industrial hemp. However, would-be thieves are targeting these plants, thinking it is marijuana. Three such cases have been reported in the last two weeks.

To the naked eye, it is difficult to distinguish a hemp plant from a marijuana plant. Not only do they look the same in both the juvenile and adult stages, they smell the same and have flowering buds. It's likely these are the reasons the Fresno County Sheriff's Office has been recently been receiving an increased number of reports for hemp thefts. It is proving to be dangerous too because thieves are not only looking to steal what they believe to be drugs, they are often arming themselves with guns.

Two such cases happened at a hemp farm located near the intersection of E. American and S. Leonard Avenues in Del Rey. Around 7:30 pm on September 27th, deputies were dispatched to a call where the property owner approached a couple of people who were loading hemp into their vehicle. **One of the suspects pointed a gun at the victim** and then drove away. Deputies searched the area, but could not find them. Around 7:00 pm on October 4th, a group of 15 to 20 people went to the property to steal plants. The property owner saw one of the suspects possessing a gun. They fled the area by the time deputies arrived.

Around 7:00 am on October 7th, deputies detained two men trying to steal hemp plants from a field on S. Willow Ave., just south of E. Mountain View Ave. in Selma. They were found to be in possession of approximately 25 plants, valued at \$5,000. Frank Carrillo, 39, of Fresno was booked into the Fresno County Jail on a felony charge of grand theft. Abraham Garza, 51, of Fresno was booked into the Fresno County Jail on a felony charge of grand theft. Garza also faces a misdemeanor charge for possession of methamphetamine.

The Department of Agriculture is the agency in charge of regulating hemp farms. It keeps a record of all licensed industrial hemp facilities. Along with a license, growers are required to have proper signage posted on the property. Many growers elect to post "No Trespassing" signs. Additionally, the sign informs the public that the field contains hemp plants, not marijuana, which do not contain a significant amount of Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). Hemp only contains approximately 0.3% THC, meaning it will not get you high.



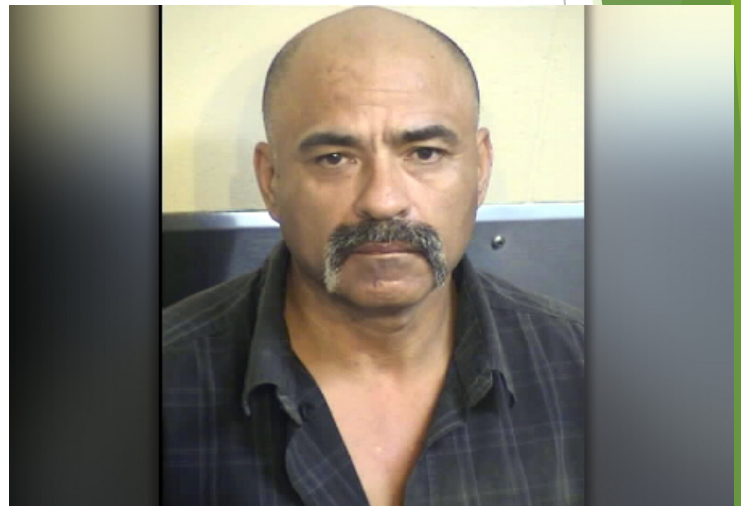
Juvenile Hemp Plant



Adult Hemp Plants



Frank Carillo



Abraham Garza



Plants Recovered from Carillo & Garza

\$1 Billion Worth of Cannabis Seized in California Hemp Field Bust

Authorities say the product's THC content was too high under state law.

BYCAITLIN DONOHUE

NOVEMBER 4, 2019



A **Southern California sheriff's department made a bust on what its owners had previously presented as a hemp field, uncovering 10 million marijuana plants with "an estimated value of over \$1 billion."** On October 25, law enforcement descended on the fields whose growers had claimed to be growing non-psychoactive hemp. They were, in fact, raising marijuana plants that clocked in at over the .3 percent THC content allowed under California law.

The investigation was catalyzed by a tip sent to the Kern County Sheriff's Office about 11 fields **sprawling out over 459 acres in the small town of Arvin.** An investigation was launched in collaboration with the FBI and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife that resulted in the October 25 search warrants.

"Preliminary testing showed the levels of THC in these fields were well over the legal limit for industrial hemp production and were in fact cannabis," The investigation is ongoing."

Kings County

Officials arrest 3 men for theft of 33 industrial hemp plants

[Lauren Wagner](#) Oct 30, 2019 Updated Dec 12, 2019



LEMOORE — Officials arrested three men involved in the **theft of 33 hemp plants after a high-speed police chase** Tuesday.

Kings County Sheriff's deputies were dispatched to a rural area south of Lemoore around 1:30 a.m. on reports of several individuals who stole hemp plants from an industrial hemp field, according to a media release.

The suspects fled the scene at a high speeds in a red Chevrolet pickup truck after being confronted by the field's caretaker. Officers then located the pickup traveling north on 17th Avenue near Kansas Avenue.

Deputies attempted to stop the pickup, but the driver sped away, officials said.

Deputies continued to pursue the pickup at speeds in excess of 100 miles per hour.

The pickup finally came to a stop near an orchard in the 13000 block of Kent Ave., where three male suspects exited the pickup and fled on foot.

A perimeter was established around the orchard and a California Highway Patrol helicopter was requested to help locate the trio, officials said. A K-9 from Kings County and the Hanford Police Department were also utilized to help locate each suspect.

Officials eventually found all three suspects, who were later identified as 37-year-old Jesus Alvarado, 36-year-old Jose Torres and 27-year-old Javier Martinez.

Riverside County

Four arrested in alleged robbery at Winchester hemp farm

By [City News Service](#) -October 28, 2019



WINCHESTER (CNS) - **Three men and a woman were arrested for allegedly stealing plants from a lawful hemp farm in Winchester at gunpoint**, authorities said Monday. It happened about 11:40 p.m. Saturday at a farm in an unincorporated area near Winchester, Riverside County sheriff's Sgt. Chad Thompson said. "Witnesses described four suspects cutting down and stealing non-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) hemp plants," Thompson said. "During this robbery, one suspect produced a firearm towards employees." The suspects fled the scene as deputies arrived but were located in Hemet and arrested, he said. A firearm was

Two acres worth of plants vandalized at Templeton hemp farm

The crop was two weeks away from harvest



By: [Allys Becerra](#)

Posted at 6:57 PM, Sep 13, 2019

The owners of a legal Templeton hemp farm are reeling after someone vandalized their crop Sunday night.

Officials say **they believe someone drove an ATV through the field** damaged at around 11:30 p.m. that night, **damaging approximately 60% of the crop.**

It was planted in June and was about two weeks away from harvest.

Ryder Nesbitt, founder of Temple Farms, believes the damage will cost his family more than a quarter-million dollars.

"This is a plant that helps people, this is not a narcotic, this is a medicine. We're within our federal and our state rights to grow this crop. We've done everything right, we've done our registration, taken all the testing that's required by the state," Nesbitt said.

The crop covered two acres on the property with each plant weighing about 10 pounds and each being at head-height.

Temple Farms was the first of 16 farms to officially pass the test for legally growing hemp at the appropriate THC levels.

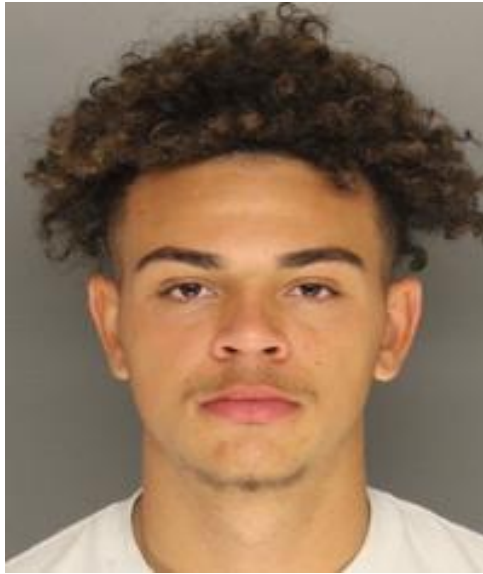
"To have someone just come in here and destroy all of our hard work, all of our money and the future for our farm is devastating," Nesbitt added.

The San Luis Obispo County Sheriff's Office says the person responsible for the crime could face felony vandalism charges.

"We've been in contact with the owners, we've been in contact with neighbors, we've been in contact with potential witnesses, so hopefully we'll be able to catch the culprit or culprits responsible," said Tony Cipolla, SLO County Sheriff's Office Public Information Officer.

Santa Maria men accused of stealing hemp worth \$350 in Orcutt; crashing stolen car

[Santa Maria Times Staff Report](#) Dec 2, 2019



Two Santa Maria men were arrested Sunday [on suspicion of felony theft](#) after allegedly stealing from a hemp grow in Orcutt and [crashing their vehicle](#) a short time later, said Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office spokeswoman Raquel Zick.

Police responded to a [report of a theft from a hemp grow](#) near Clark Avenue and Dominion Road at 2:49 p.m. on Sunday, Zick said.

The vehicle allegedly involved in the theft fled the scene but crashed almost immediately, Zick said.

When deputies arrived, Zick said, they discovered 21-year-old Tyeshai Evans and 18-year-old Johnny Dewitt, both from Santa Maria, inside the vehicle — a 1996 Toyota 4-door sedan that was reported stolen.

The hemp taken is reported to be worth approximately \$350, Zick said.

Dewitt and Evans were booked into Santa Barbara County Jail on felonies that include grand theft, vehicle theft and possession of a stolen vehicle. Both are out on bail, Zick said.



Hemp growers want Solano to temper 'get out' reaction; work toward solution

Hemp farmer Danny Lay stands next to a crop growing in rural Dixon, Thursday, Nov. 7, 2019. The Solano County Board of Supervisors recently issued a moratorium on hemp cultivation and processing. (Robinson Kuntz/Daily Republic)

By [Todd R. Hansen](#)

DIXON — Danny Lay is married and has three children.

He quit his job in Los Angeles to run a state- and county-permitted industrial hemp farm in remote, rural Dixon, what was expected to be at least a three-year commitment, and believing the future was looking brighter for his family.

Now he doesn't know what will happen to him or any of his 10 employees, many of them also with families. Dec. 31 is the deadline for all hemp operations in the county to complete the harvest and processing of the crops.

The Solano County Board of Supervisors this week approved a 45-day moratorium on hemp cultivation and processing in the county, and it appeared as though some board members support a complete ban on industrial hemp operations in the county.



Hemp grows at a rural Dixon farm, Thursday, Nov. 7, 2019. (Robinson Kuntz/Daily Republic)

"I want banning it to be one of the options," Supervisor Jim Spering said, instructing staff about choices the board can look at when it has to decide Dec. 10 whether to extend the moratorium and possibly task its staff to develop new regulations, or as other board members equally suggested, end hemp operations in Solano.

There were concerns about whether a complete ban would put the county in a difficult legal position, a court fight Spering said he was willing to wage if it came to that.

Supervisor Monica Brown expressed her concerns about what that decision would mean for current growers, and the possible loss of their investment.

The board's decision was a reaction to reports of criminal activity around some of the nine farming sites, including reports of gunfire, burglary and dangerous high-speed chases. It was described at Tuesday's board meeting as the "wild, wild west."

"It's a health and safety issue and I don't want to see someone killed," Jason Coleman said.

Supervisors Skip Thomson and John Vasquez also had attended a couple of community meetings prior to the issues coming to the full board.

"At those meetings I became aware of the problems that needed to be addressed," Thomson said at the Tuesday board meeting.

However, Agriculture Commissioner Ed King and Bill Emlen, director of the Department of Resource Management, each said no one anticipated the kind and severity of criminal activity that has taken place.

King said in a phone interview that other counties are experiencing similar issues, but he thinks – and he told the board the same thing – Solano's location between large urban Bay Area cities and Sacramento may have left it more vulnerable.

Larry Nixon went so far as to suggest that by letting the hemp farmers into the county, the Board of Supervisors would be putting the welcome mat out to organized crime.

"If you continue to allow hemp (farming), organized crime will have a toe-hold in Solano County," Nixon told the supervisors. "For your sake and ours, don't let the cartels get started in Solano County."

The comparison did not sit well with Lay, but it was enough to keep him from speaking before the board because he is of Asian decent and said he was concerned for his safety in the emotionally charged room.

But the hemp growers argue they are not the criminals, and they and their employees should not be punished for those activities.

"This is an honest living," Lay said. "I work for a company and have 10 employees. So what is going to happen to them?"

Lay and the New Boy Farms operation in rural Dixon did not have any of the problems that some of the other eight sites had, including **reports of gunfire, burglary and dangerous high-speed chases.**

The Sheriff's Office recorded more than 50 calls for service since Sept. 20, and Sheriff Tom Ferrara told the supervisors his biggest fear is that one of his deputies would be ambushed while responding on a call.

"That is my biggest worry," Ferrara said. "We've been very fortunate that nobody's been injured in the last couple of months."

The imagery brought an immediate comparison to **El Dorado County Deputy Brian Ishmael**, whose funeral was held the same day as the board meeting. He was fatally shot while responding to a dispute at an illegal marijuana farming operation in his county.

Lay and other growers, including Matthew Schwartz, a partner in the AAI group out of Chico, said the focus of the county should be on finding regulatory solutions.

At the very least, Schwartz said in a phone interview, the county should lay the groundwork for allowing the growers to transition from the hemp operations designed to produce CBD oils, to different hemp varieties that produce fiber and seeds.

That way, Schwartz said, the growers will not lose their investments.

Vasquez compared the risk of losing the crop by the county's regulatory hammer to that of any farmer who could lose a crop due to adverse weather.

While Schwartz and his partner, Shawn Welborn, were not willing to say what their start-up costs were for the 9-acre, 12,000-plant farm, they did describe it as significant and said the Dec. 31 deadline could be fatal to the bottom line.

If they had to, Welborn said they would consider legal action.

"It is absolutely an item of discussion, and with our network with other farmers in the county, but the last thing I would want to be involved in is a class action lawsuit," Welborn said.

Schwartz said educating the public would be a better first step than a complete ban.

Lay said he is not sure what his company would do next, or whether legal action is even a consideration.

However, he provided a ballpark investment of close to \$460,000, which includes a \$300,000 deposit on a purchase option, \$7,500 for each of the seven pop-up greenhouses that have been built, and 13 more that would have to be paid for whether they are built or not.

Each seed costs \$1, Lay said, equalling about \$9,000.

Additionally, the company is leasing the 156 acres for \$700 per acre on a three-year commitment.

The greenhouses are being used because the operation started too late for the normal summer growing season, and is essentially a kind of break-even place holder for the company to get to the next season.

Outdoor operations, he said, are better for crop yield.

Like Schwartz, Lay said he believes the county needs to focus on finding solutions rather than bringing the ax down on hemp farming.

He said that could start with stronger penalties for those committing the crimes, rather than penalizing the farmers.

As for land-use regulations, he suggested greater minimum distances from any neighboring residences, fencing and other security requirements.

Additionally, AAI and New Boy Farms representatives said their companies were at least considering opening their own processing plants in Solano County, which would mean more jobs and tax revenues.

AAI has a seed operation in Butte County.

While both operations dry the plants on-site, New Boy then uses a Colorado firm to do the oil extraction.

Welborn said patience is needed rather than rash action.

"It's a big learning curve for everybody," he said.

Alleged thieves caught with car full of stolen hemp plants in Solano County

DIXON, Calif. — Updated: 12:44 PM PDT Oct 6, 2019



Solano County deputies nabbed three alleged thieves after they were found with several stolen hemp plants stuffed inside a car, authorities said.

Deputies made a traffic stop early Friday after the person behind the wheel of a Honda was seen driving erratically away from a farm in the unincorporated area of Dixon, according to the Solano County Sheriff's Office.

The three people inside the car were surrounded by several large hemp plants that were stolen from a legal hemp farm.

The trio was taken into custody on several drug and burglary charges, the sheriff's office said.

According to the sheriff's office, there have been multiple reports recently of thieves sneaking onto rural properties and farms in Solano County to pilfer from legal and illegal marijuana grow operations.

Ventura County

Alleged hemp theft in Piru leads to arrest of 70-year-old man

Gretchen Wenner

Ventura 11/8/19

Authorities arrested a 70-year-old man allegedly caught trying to steal bags of hemp from a legal growing operation in Piru early Friday.

The incident was reported around 2 a.m. in the 4000 block East Telegraph Avenue, as Highway 126 is called in the area, the Ventura County Sheriff's Office reported. The site is near the intersection with Torrey Road.

A security guard monitoring an industrial hemp farm saw a man holding a large bag and ordered him to stop, but he fled on foot, authorities said. The guard checked the area for any accomplices and reportedly found a second man "lying in the field among marijuana plants," authorities said. The man was identified as Timothy Fulp, 70, from the Sun Valley neighborhood of Los Angeles.

Deputies found multiple trash bags filled with recently cut hemp plants, authorities said, along with hedge clippers apparently used to cut the crop. Authorities also reportedly found methamphetamine on the ground and found drug paraphernalia on Fulp.

Industrial hemp provides cannabidiol, or CBD, oil used to make health-related products but has negligible intoxicant properties. Fulp reportedly told deputies that "he believed the hemp he was stealing was marijuana that contained THC," the component that makes people high, according to authorities' account.

The suspect who fled on foot was not caught.

Fulp was arrested on suspicion of felony grand theft and conspiracy violations as well as several drug violations, officials said. He remained in Ventura County jail Friday night with bail set at \$50,000.



Other States

Hemp Thefts Skyrocket In The USA

By [Steven Gothrinet](#) - October 21, 2019



It looks as though many hemp farmers in the USA have been facing an uphill battle in protecting their crops from pests – the two-legged kind.

It wasn't that long ago news of hemp theft wasn't all that common, but with so many states now permitting cultivating the crop and harvest season in play, incidents are being reported daily.

Among the instances of plants being stolen reported across the country over the last few weeks:

- In Fresno County, California, [three incidents](#) occurred within two weeks. In one incident, a suspect pointed a firearm at the owner of the property before making an escape. The same property was then raided again around a week later by a group of 15-20 people, one of them armed.
 - In Williamson County, Texas, one juvenile was arrested for [theft of hemp](#) – with investigations continuing in identifying other suspects.
 - In Plainfield, Illinois, [three thieves were arrested](#). The farmer was also charged with reckless discharge of a firearm and reckless conduct as he held the thieves at gunpoint.
 - In [Napanee](#), Indiana, a man was arrested for stealing \$3,500 worth of hemp.
 - In Montgomery County, Maryland, [four people](#) have been arrested for stealing hemp from a farm.
 - In St. Joseph County, Michigan, [six were arrested](#) following an attempted theft.
 - In Savannah, New York, a farmer says his plants are being [stolen every night](#).
- ... and the list goes on.

Aside from the thefts themselves being upsetting and costly, the involvement of firearms and violence is becoming more commonplace.

Farmers have to battle [various pests](#) that seek to destroy their livelihood – they

really don't need the additional stresses and danger of two-legged ones with guns. Some of these thieves are just clueless – there is no point in stealing hemp destined for food or fibre applications as it has zero recreational value. However, crops grown for cannabidiol are also being targeted – perhaps for CBD extraction, which is a valuable (but non-intoxicating) compound. But even with CBD crops, it's more likely also a case of mistaken identity or for the purposes of trying to pass off dried product to unsuspecting buyers as marijuana.

The situation in the USA is something farmers in other countries such as Australia should be watching closely – an added risk to be factored in and weighed up against potential rewards. Theft is also happening here; albeit not as common as hemp farming is still in its very early stages in Australia. We reported back in September a couple of hemp farmers in South Australia found trespassing on their property to be relentless; to the point they'll [never grow the crop again](#).

In Australia, being apprehended for stealing hemp can result in punishment for more than just trespass and theft, as possession of plants without a licence is a serious offence.

Four arrested in hemp theft



Kenneth James Wambles

•Special to The Sun Nov 13, 2019

Coffee County investigators working with the Opp Police Department arrested four men in connection with the theft of industrial hemp on Nov. 13, according to a Coffee County Sheriff's Office press release.

Zachary Douglas, Jacob Blue, Kenneth James Wambles and David Wayne Hutchison were all arrested and charged with first-degree theft of property, according to the release.

The industrial hemp was allegedly taken from a rural area of Coffee County, according to the release.

The four were taken to the Coffee County Jail after their arrest on \$7,500 bond, according to the release.

The CCSO said additional investigations into industrial hemp thefts are ongoing at this time and future arrests are expected.

Colorado

Likely by mistake, thieves steal \$300,000 worth of cannabis 'look-alike' in Colorado



File photo. Photo Credit: chrisss_ns (iStock).

•[Breanna Sneeringer](#) Dec 16, 2020

The Bayfield Marshal's Office is investigating the theft of hundreds of hemp plants valued at \$300,000 from an industrial greenhouse in Colorado, now offering a reward of up to \$8,000 for information that may help find those responsible.

Officials [confirmed](#) that 170 hemp plants, likely mistaken for marijuana, were stolen from an industrial hemp company called Evergrow Harvest in Bayfield. The \$300,000 theft is believed to have occurred last week, either late Thursday evening or early Friday morning.

"The way they went after the plants that were hanging makes me believe they thought they were marijuana plants and not industrial hemp plants," Zephaniah Lee, owner of Evergrow Harvest, told the [Durango Herald](#). While the two plants share a similar smell and appearance, hemp plants contain less tetrahydrocannabinol, or THC, the psychoactive substance found in recreational marijuana. Hemp is high in cannabidiol, also known as CBD, a non-intoxicating compound traditionally used for medicinal purposes.

Indiana

Indy hemp farm becomes target for thieves following legalization of hemp as a crop

by: [Jesse Wells](#)

Posted: Oct 23, 2019 / 04:31 PM EDT

INDIANAPOLIS, Ind. — An Indianapolis hemp farmer falls victim to what some are calling uninformed crooks. Police say a half-dozen people tried to steal hemp plants from the northwest side farm Tuesday night.

Police reports show thieves hit the same farm 3 times in the last two and a half weeks.

According to court records, officers found 6 people stealing hemp plants Tuesday night. Police arrested 21-year-old Dayshawn Mumford and 19-year-old Alyssia Clark, but the other four suspects got away.

The crime comes after thieves stole over a thousand hemp plants from the same farm earlier this month.

Experts in the hemp industry say a little education could prevent those crimes.

"It stems from the misalignment at the federal level of putting hemp in there was marijuana or other psychoactive controlled substances," said Justin Swanson with the Midwest Hemp Council.

Swanson says even though a federal Farm Bill in 2018 removed industrial hemp from the controlled substances act and the Indiana statehouse passed a law to regulate hemp as a legal crop, many people remain uneducated about what hemp is and what it isn't.

"You've got to keep in mind this is a plant that was misaligned at the federal level for 75 plus years. It was treated from a legal point just like heroin or LSD," said Swanson. There are lots of legitimate uses for hemp, including manufacturing CBD oil, but the hemp grown on farms across the state cannot be used for recreational drug use due to the low levels of THC.

"A lot of these farmers know the crop they have is valuable, but not for psychoactive reasons," said Swanson. "If you don't have an outlet for that biomass, it's no different than going in and taking corn off a corn cob."

Swanson hopes as people learn they can't get high from industrial hemp, thefts like the one this month in Indianapolis will come to an end.

"People that are exploring other people's properties are uneducated about what's growing and they're going to be sorely disappointed if they're in there for the wrong reasons," said Swanson.

The farm's owner says they removed all the hemp crops from the property.

Police booked both suspects arrested Tuesday night into the Marion County jail. Both are due in court on Thursday.

Six arrested in theft at Michigan hemp farm, farmer hit by suspect's car

Updated Oct 15, 2019; Posted Oct 15, 2019



CBD, or cannabidiol, comes from hemp, often called the cannabis plant's cousin. It only has less than 0.3% THC, the psychoactive compound that gets you high. (Micah Castelo | Syracuse.com)

By [Ryan Boldrey | rboldrey@mlive.com](mailto:rboldrey@mlive.com)

ST. JOSEPH COUNTY, MI — Multiple people were arrested following an attempted theft at a hemp farm in St. Joseph County on Monday night.

According to a news release from the St. Joseph County Sheriff's Office, farmers working in the field noticed a suspicious vehicle parked in the field. **As the farmers approached the vehicle, attempting to make contact with the occupants, the driver of the vehicle tried to flee the scene, and ran into one of the farmers in the process.**

"The farmers were subsequently able to get the vehicle stopped, and upon arrival of deputies on scene had four subjects detained with a large amount of stolen hemp in their possession," Sheriff Bradley Balk stated in the release.

Deputies responded to the scene, near the intersection of Clark Road and Haas Road in Mendon Township, at approximately 9:30 p.m. Oct. 14.

At that time, **more suspicious vehicles were located and deputies took additional people attempting to leave the field into custody**, the release states.

Six subjects from the Battle Creek area were lodged at the St. Joseph County Jail on several felony charges, according to police. Those charges include larceny over \$1,000, felonious assault and providing false information to police investigating a felony.

Balk stated that additional charges are being requested through the prosecutor's office for two other people.

Deputies were assisted on the scene by the Mendon Police Department.

Arrests made in separate suspected hemp thefts



JACKSON COUNTY, Ore. – Two people believed to be involved in stealing hemp were arrested in separate incidents Wednesday.

The Jackson County Sheriff's Office said the first incident started at 3:53 a.m. when a suspicious vehicle was found near a hemp field close to Griffin Creek Road southwest of Medford.

October 30, 2019

A deputy approached the person sleeping inside the grey Dodge Durango, but the suspect drove off, leading deputies on a chase through several gated rural properties.

Eventually, the suspect stopped the Durango in a driveway and ran away. He was found after being tracked for about 90 minutes.

The man initially lied about his name. However, investigators say they were able to identify him as 45-year-old Jon Allen Firehammer from Grants Pass. He was arrested for multiple charges and outstanding warrants.

Investigators believe another person who was with the man was left behind in the area.

The second incident started at about 9:40 a.m. after a patrol deputy in his patrol vehicle and two hemp farm employees were almost hit by a Toyota Tacoma that was speeding in reverse from a driveway in the 5200 block of Upton Road.

Deputies said the driver sped off after a short confrontation with one of the employees. They told the deputy the driver of the vehicle was caught stealing hemp and was fleeing when the deputy arrived.

Deputies and an Oregon State Police trooper followed the direction of the vehicle and eventually found it crashed at the end of the road.

The driver, 27-year-old Tanner Charles McNew from Medford, was reportedly uncooperative and deputies had forcibly remove him from the Tacoma. Police said he was found with marijuana, methamphetamine and hemp that's believed to have been stolen from the Upton Road address.

McNew was lodged in the Jackson County Jail on numerous charges including theft, eluding police, reckless driving, and drug possession.

[Michael Moser](#) Aug 17, 2020

Cumberland County sheriff's deputies are investigating a **report that someone stole hemp plants valued at \$80,000 from a hemp farm** Aug. 9, according to an incident report.

Deputies were called to the 300 block of E. Main St. in Pleasant Hill shortly before 1 p.m. and met with the victim, according to Deputy Anthony Justice's report.

The victim stated that someone had come onto the hemp farm during the dark hours of the night before and stole around 80 plants.

Justice was in the process of taking a report when when Crossville Police Sgt. Jared Scott notified him that he had stopped a Linger Lake Rd. motorist who had hemp plants in the the bed of his pickup truck. The motorist said he was given the plants by an acquaintance as payment for gas that he delivered to the acquaintance.

According to the report, the motorist said there were many more plants where he had gotten those plants.

Scott seized the plants and they were taken to the victim to see if they could be identified as the stolen plants. Police then placed the plants in an evidence locker as the investigation continues.

ORGANIZED CRIME AND HEMP – TRACY'S STORY

Armed robbery is a new term for the hemp industry. Unfortunately for Tracy, his worst nightmares are coming true in his fields as he battles a slew of petty and organized criminals targeting his crops. **Little did Tracy know that a chance encounter with thieves would end in automatic weapons, gunfire and the Aryan Brotherhood,** We want to share the story of our friend and client as a means to help raise awareness and to help you protect your farm and your own well being. Fortunately, Tracy was not injured in this encounter, but we hope you join us in sending well wishes to him, his crop, and family.

Tracy Lehman is one of the few [USDA](#) certified hemp farmers in the United States. His roadside field was planted in June with no problems until about 3 weeks ago when Tracy noticed that he was losing of a plant here and there every few days. Tracy figured that it was common knowledge that his field is Agricultural Hemp due to his involvement in his local municipality, but large green plants on the side of the road still attract a lot of attention.

Tip #1

Post signage with your Department of Agriculture certification clearly stating that you are farming hemp. We recommend investing in this signage, similar to “No Trespassing” signs.

Why?

People confuse hemp crops with medical Marijuana. Although your neighbors, friends and local population may know your crop, one misguided person can ruin your day. Ignorant individuals who think you are growing high THC Cannabis will spread the word, at which point their dreams of a jackpot are quickly spread through malicious channels.

“About 10 days ago, Friday, I noticed that someone had taken 25 plants – cut a block of the field,” said Tracy. Clearly theft was on the rise, being proactive Tracy setup video surveillance around the perimeter of his farm using game cameras, and linking the video feed back to his house. The plants grew to 6-7 feet tall, and more people started taking notice to it.

On alert, Tracy began to notice vehicles making multiple passes by his property, and later that night a suspicious minivan and pickup truck packed on the far end of his property and turned off their lights. Tracy hopped into his truck to confront the thieves, as soon as he got in the truck, “they left quick.”



Utah Three men arrested in connection to \$40,000 'hemp product' theft

•[By Jackson Wilde staff writer](#) Jan 1, 2021

Deputies arrested three men on New Year's Eve for alleged theft of "hemp product" valued at approximately \$40,000.

Wayne Van Breeding, 40, Jermey Shan Breeding, 34, and Matthew Ryan Littler, 33, were booked into the Cache County Jail on Thursday following a monthlong investigation of a storage unit theft in Smithfield.

Eight blue 55-gallon drums of "hemp product" valued at \$40,000, in addition to a flatbed trailer, were stolen from the unit in November, Cache County Sheriff's deputies allege. According to a probable cause affidavit, video surveillance footage showed at least two suspects — believed to be Jeremy and Matthew — stealing the hemp and trailer with a Jeep Grand Cherokee.

According to documents filed with the courts, a search warrant for electronic monitoring was approved the day after the Smithfield theft allegedly occurred. The court authorized officers to install a mobile tracking or GPS device on the distinctively marked Jeep as part of the investigation.

"Officers may enter any property to install, maintain or remove the device at any time, day or night and without notice of authority or purpose," the warrant states.

On Thursday, according to the affidavit, law enforcement conducted a traffic stop of the Jeep and Jeremy was detained for questioning.

During the investigation, deputies wrote the Jeep had also been associated with a storage unit theft in Idaho and stolen items may be at Wayne's residence in Richmond. "Video footage shows Jeremy and another person, later identified as Matt Littler, unloading suspected stolen items from the Jeep and carrying them onto the property in Richmond," deputies wrote.

The affidavit does not specify where the video footage originated.

A search of Wayne's home, according to deputies, yielded stolen items from the Idaho theft. Two medium-sized duffel bags containing "several buds of hemp flower" were located on the property. The barrels and trailer were located in a remote location north of Richmond, deputies wrote, and controlled substances were also located in the home and in the Jeep.

Matthew and Jeremy were booked into jail on suspicion of felony theft and burglary charges and additional controlled substance misdemeanors; both men were ordered to be held without bail. Wayne was booked on suspicion of misdemeanor theft by receiving stolen property and controlled substance charges; he was ordered to be held on \$500 bondable bail and to comply with various release conditions.

Formal charges have not been filed.

Hefty reward offered in hemp theft

•Monday, February 01, 2021

By MELINDA WILLIAMS
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CHRISTIANSBURG — After **burglars made off with enough hemp over the past week to result in a six-figure loss**, a Christiansburg producer decided it was time to offer up a reward.

John Straw, manager of True Harvest Farms in Christiansburg, said the business is offering a \$50,000 reward to anyone who can provide information leading to the conviction of the person or persons who made off with over 100 pounds of one variety of hemp flowers.

Straw said the business was first hit around Monday, Jan. 11, and again early this past Monday. He feels sure the culprits in both burglaries are the same because their method of making entry to the building, the product stolen, and other evidence in the thefts are identical.

He believes multiple suspects may be involved, but only one person entered the building each time. In both instances the suspect forced entry through the back door to the business and then multiple other doors to reach the species of hemp flower that was stolen.

In the first burglary, they made off with 60 pounds of one particular variety of hemp flowers and in the second instance they made off with the remaining 50 pounds of that same variety.

The variety stolen is legal to smoke in Virginia, just like there are other varieties and forms of CBD (cannabidiol) hemp that are legally available. The product is often used medicinally and does not get one high like THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) in marijuana. "We had about 10 different kinds in there, but they cleaned us out on that variety," he said. The suspect may not have initially been aware there is no high produced from the product, but, Straw said, they certainly should have realized it by the time the second burglary occurred if they were using it.

The value of the missing product is in excess of \$200,000, according to Straw. When the business first opened in the spring of 2019, it experienced some problems with people stealing hemp from its fields, but there had been no other thefts until recently. This is the first time the building has been burglarized.

The product in storage, including what was stolen, was grown last season.

Virginia hemp growers face rash of crop thefts

by [Jonathan Cribbs](#) | Oct 18, 2019



Kenny Powell, 52, inspects a hemp plant on his farm in Emporia, Va., on Oct. 11. Powell and his sons have been patrolling their farm with guns since a group of hemp thieves fired at Powell's 24-year-old son Quinton last month. (Photo by Jonathan Cribbs)

EMPORIA, Va. — Quinton Powell and a friend were **patrolling his family's industrial hemp farm in a pickup one night last month when they discovered a group of men ripping plants from the ground and placing them into the back of a truck. When he confronted the group, one of the men raised a handgun and started firing. Several bullets struck Quinton's truck, narrowly missing his head, and the man continued to shoot as 24-year-old Quinton and his friend fled.**

Miraculously, no one was injured.

His father, who raced to the field, was stunned. It's their first year raising hemp.

"I had no idea that they were willing to take somebody's life over a d— few little plants," said Kenny Powell, 52.

The Sept. 19 incident was the most serious in a recent rash of hemp thefts that have shocked farmers and law enforcement officials in southern Virginia. In March, the state legislature legalized the commercial production of industrial hemp, and more than 1,000 farmers quickly registered to grow it. More than 2,000 acres were planted statewide, according to the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

But the crop's arrival has been a boon for thieves and marijuana dealers who have targeted farms in Greensville, Brunswick and Dinwiddie counties, law enforcement officials said. While some have mistaken the pungent, flowery plants for marijuana, police said drug dealers are stealing hemp to mix it with illegal cannabis and boost their profits.

"I'm not surprised a lot of this has happened," said Maj. William B. Knott of the Dinwiddie County Sheriff's Office. "It's been an ongoing problem."

Since this season's crop began to mature a month and a half ago, police in Greensville and Dinwiddie have arrested more than 20 people in connection with hemp thefts.

Following the shooting on the Powells' farm, the Greensville County Sheriff's Office staked out their fields, hoping to catch someone in the act.

It worked. Five days later, deputies caught two men from Petersburg, a city about 40 miles north of the Powells. The confrontation led to a high-speed chase through downtown Emporia, which sits about 10 miles north of the Carolina border. The men crashed their vehicle in a Walmart parking lot and fled on foot. They were quickly caught, and police recovered a handgun.

Many of those arrested are from across the region — Petersburg, Norfolk, even Charlotte, N.C. When police checked the cell phone messages of one man charged, they discovered he had sent the location of the Powells' farm to friends across the state. He'd spotted the roadside field while driving.

"It's going to keep happening," said Detective Chris Rook of the Greenville County Sheriff's Office. "It's too tempting for them."

Twelve people were arrested in connection with thefts from a single Dinwiddie farm.

"I guess the word is out," Knott said.

After a series of thefts in Brunswick County, Sheriff Brian Roberts stationed deputies at a hemp field for several nights before making an arrest. Some farmers in the region have resorted to installing wildlife cameras in their fields to record any criminal activity, he said.

"I think all of this is new, and I think everybody is trying to learn what are the pros and cons, and what are the precautions" of raising hemp," he said.

Hemp theft has been reported in other parts of Virginia this year, but several state officials expressed surprise last week at the size of the problem in the southern part of the state. The agriculture department is eager to help farmers protect their hemp, but the thefts are mostly a law enforcement issue, said Erin Williams, a senior policy analyst coordinating the state's hemp program.

"I know it's frustrating for these growers to have to battle this component connected to this industry," she said. "We encourage applicants to be mindful of where they plant their crop."

For decades, hemp cultivation was illegal in the United States, but for the last several years, states have been permitted to raise it for research purposes. The market opened, however, when the federal government removed hemp from its list of controlled substances and legalized its production in the 2018 Farm Bill.

In response, the Virginia legislature also legalized production. Hemp is a form of *cannabis sativa*, along with marijuana, but growers are required to limit its THC level to 0.3 percent. THC, short for tetrahydrocannabinol, is the primary psychoactive compound in marijuana that can make users high. Regulators will force farmers to destroy a hemp crop whose THC level exceeds that limit. The crop can be processed into many products, including rope, building materials, auto parts, animal feed, cosmetics, oil and food additives.

Though there's no national data yet, theft across the country appears to be common. Some incidents have also led to threats and violence. In Fresno County, Calif., where hemp theft has reportedly been a growing problem this year, a man threatened a farmer with a gun before driving away with stolen hemp on Sept. 27. Days later, police said, a group of more than 15 people invaded his farm to steal again. No arrests were reported.

In Pulaski County, Ky., a farmer reportedly captured at gunpoint a thief with a trash bag of stolen hemp on Sept. 22. Police arrested that man. Later that night, police returned to the farm for another burglary call and arrested two others.

Erica Stark, executive director at the National Hemp Association, said she's surprised at the rash of recent crimes.

"This is the first I'm hearing about it on a bigger scale," she said.

Hemp production nationwide is growing quickly. About 32,000 acres of industrial hemp were planted nationwide in 2018, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. This year, more than 144,000 acres have been recorded as of Oct. 1. Up to 47 states now permit some form of cultivation.

"We've seen expansion everywhere," Stark said.

That growth is likely driving the increase in crime, she said. Thieves could also be stealing the plants for the hemp flowers, which, alone, can fetch hundreds of dollars per pound.

"It's a shame this is a conversation that we even need to be having, but it is happening," she said. "What the ultimate solution is, I don't know."

The Virginia thefts were a concern last week for Maryland agricultural officials who oversee the state's hemp research program. More than 60 farmers, partnered with local universities, registered to grow about 1,400 acres of hemp in Maryland this year, said Jim Drews, program manager for the agriculture department's turf and seed section. The state is waiting for final federal guidelines on hemp production before allowing farmers to grow independently.

Drews said he hadn't heard of any farmers dealing with serious theft issues. But that could change soon, said Andrew Ristvey, a University of Maryland Extension agent working with the program.

"This is exactly what (we) were very worried about," he said. "If that's happening, then our local farmers are going to feel this too."

It's one reason the state agriculture department advised hemp farmers to plant in secluded areas, he said.

Hemp theft in southern Virginia has died down since law enforcement officials made their arrests. Prosecutions in those cases have not started, Knott said, but he hopes they send a message to potential thieves looking to target vulnerable fields.

He's also looking forward to the end of hemp season.

"We're doing some proactive patrols (around fields), which we did, are doing and will continue to do until we harvest the crop, which I hope will be very soon," he said.

In Emporia, the Powells have chosen to take security into their own hands. Every night since the shooting, Quinton, his 26-year-old brother, Kaleb Powell, or Kenny sit in the fields, armed, monitoring the darkness.

The crop has been a savior. Due to the trade war between the United States and China, the Powells lost long-held, overseas tobacco contracts in the spring, placing their multi-generational farm at risk. He partnered with a friend to grow hemp, which they're processing into CBD oil for the retail market.

He grew 200 acres this year and expects he'll raise more in the future.

"If it hadn't been for this hemp, they would have sold every d— thing I ever worked for in my life," Kenny said.

He was standing watch over his field in the dark with an assault rifle strapped to his chest. When he imagines the shooting, it still shocks him.

"I'm a red-blooded, American farmer, and my daddy taught to me shoot, and I taught my boys to shoot, but I never thought we'd have to tote a gun here and worry about getting killed," he said.

Hemp farmer loses \$70,000 in plants to thieves who think it's marijuana

by Megan Magensky | KEPR-TV News
Tuesday, October 29th 2019

FRANKLIN COUNTY, Wash. — A Franklin County hemp farmer is losing tens of thousands of dollars in plants to thieves that are taking the hemp thinking it's marijuana.

"They think it's something that it isn't, and that's why they're doing what they're doing," said Matthew Morrell, the owner of MM Hay Services, LLC. One of his fields is just off of Highway 395 in Franklin County.

It's now time to harvest, but thieves are stealing Morrell's crop.

"We started off with a few plants here and there getting pulled, and it's gradually just ramped up kind of out of control to where last night (Sunday) we had people that were armed getting out of vehicles to come steal plants," Morrell said.

The plants look and smell like marijuana, but hemp can't get you high. Hemp plants have less than .3 percent THC, which is the chemical that creates psychological effects. Marijuana plants can have up to 30 percent.

KEPR-TV News Video

"People are going to be stupid and go out and try to steal it and get high with it and it's not going to happen," said Franklin County Sheriff Jim Raymond. He said they've arrested several people in connection to theft and trespassing in the hemp field.

Growing hemp in the U.S. just became legal in February. Morrell's hemp plants make CBD oil which he said Walgreens and CVS buy to put in medication. Morrell said people need to get used to seeing the plant and educate themselves on what it is.

"It's just a standard crop like corn or wheat or alfalfa or anything else now," Morrell said.

Morrell said the thieves have stolen around \$70,000 worth of hemp plants. "I've had to hire people to come out here and patrol to try to keep people from stealing the crop from us," Morrell said.

Wisconsin

Two suspects arrested for stealing hemp plants from Columbia County grower's field



[September 18, 2020](#)

SPRINGVALE (WKOW) -- The Columbia County Sheriff's Office says deputies arrested two people accused of stealing legally grown and licensed industrial hemp plants. The suspects are Barbara Vant Hoff, age 59, and Gregory Vant Hoff, age 64, of Beaver Dam.

On Sept. 12 a landowner in Springvale called the Columbia County Sheriff's Office after interrupting the theft of his plants. As the suspects drove off, the landowner was able to get the license plate number of their vehicle.

The landowner told the authorities he believed these same suspects had stolen hemp from the land before.

Officers from the Beaver Dam Police Department helped a Columbia County detective make contact with the suspects Sept. 17 in Beaver Dam.

According to authorities, the suspects admitted to stealing the hemp flower on two occasions, believing the plants were illegal marijuana plants.

Investigators **recovered approximately 10 pounds of stolen hemp flower, with an approximate value of \$1,000.**

The Vant Hoff's were taken into custody by the Columbia County Sheriff's Office with the assistance of the Beaver Dam Police Department and are now in the Columbia County Jail awaiting a court appearance.

The following charges are being referred to the Columbia County District Attorney's Office:

Misdemeanor- Theft, 2 counts

Felony- Criminal damage to property, 2 counts

Trespass to land, 2 counts

The Columbia County Sheriff's Office is reminding everyone that industrial hemp plants are grown legally throughout Columbia County. The Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection administers the industrial hemp program in the State of Wisconsin. Industrial hemp plants have many uses and are commonly grown to make CBD products.



Virginia hemp farmer carries gun to protect crop, kids: 'They shot at my flesh and blood'

<https://youtu.be/jnhwrgFqyXg>