



# Hangtown Brew Noose

[www.hazeclub.org](http://www.hazeclub.org)

HOPFEN UND MALZ, GOTT ERHALZ!

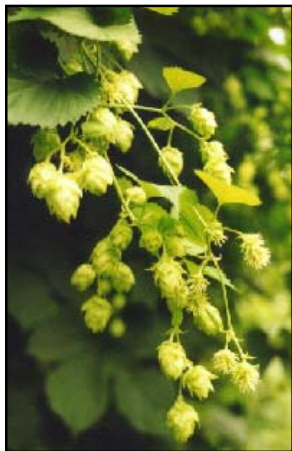


## Brewers Under Siege! The Hop Crisis - Part III



Last month we covered some strategies for getting through or, better yet, adapting, to the turn of an unfriendly card. We have yet one more arrow in our quiver, one more card in our hand, one more...oh, heck, you get the idea! Growing our own hops, while no means a complete solution, can be a very satisfying one as far as it goes. And hops are relatively simple to grow, and only a little more difficult to get to harvest. So, you know the drill, go get a beer. I recommend a Deschutes Inversion IPA.

*Humulus lupulus* is a hardy perennial which grows as a bine, wrapping around anything it can get its bristly little "hands" on. To grow hops for personal use you need little more than a half barrel or equivalent space full of well draining, rich soil of pH around 7 (5-8 is probably okay, which is a huge range), and a very sunny location. They should be kept well watered during the entire growing season but never allowed to get soggy. The soil can be improved with wood ash, manure, or compost (which you've made from spent grain of previous brews!).



Sunlight is critical as hops are very photosensitive and will not fruit if they receive less than 12 hours sunlight during mid summer. Because they need so much sun, they will also use a lot of water, so pay attention to it. There is one new variety, Sunbeam, which supposedly grows in part shade and is thus ideal for growing under a tree. I will be trying this variety,

although I do not know anything about its bittering or aroma characteristics (obviously, I haven't taken the advice I gave last month about researching hops on-line!).

Another key requirement of hops is height. The vines can grow straight up as high as 20 to 30 feet, so make

sure there's room to do it as well as a pole or string to allow for climbing (the female plants prefer poles!). Going back to Sunbeam, I might tie strings from the branches of the tree to the ground to allow for the vines to climb (and she'll be pissed off at me).

The variety of hops you choose to grow is a balance between what you like to brew (and how much) and where you live. In New England, where there is a



short growing season (sometimes only 50 days), people have had success with almost every available variety, but especially with those that are normally fast-growing and productive

such as Cascade, Nugget, Chinook, and Willamette. However, we live in Mecca! Not only are we in the Cradle of the birth of the craftbrew renaissance, we can also grow just about any variety of hop possible. A huge percentage of commercial hops are grown in the Yakima and Willamette valleys. If you prepare the soil, research the site carefully, and remember to water your plants properly during the first year of growth, you can overcome almost any climate.

To start, we need female hop rhizomes, the bud-producing runners from which the plants grow. I rely on a professional to properly sex my hops - I've never had much luck in that area! Try to find a reputable grower or supplier and have them certify the rhizomes are female. Only female hop plants produce cones and if male plants are lurking about, the cones become seeded. Most brewers prefer seedless hops. Also, once you get your rhizomes, plant them right away, even if you have to temporarily pot them.



While you're waiting for your rhizome order to come in, pick your location. Again, you need full sun all day, with lots of height. Southern exposure is preferred. Add lots of organic and composted matter to the area, turning it in to a depth of 18 inches. Don't forget to consider raised beds. Hops spread by rhizomes and can easily get out of control. A raised bed provides a nice measure of control. Wine barrel halves are particularly good because they can be moved as necessary to the ideal site in the garden.

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HAZE is dedicated to fostering social and educational opportunities for homebrewers in the foothills.

Brew Noose Editor: Michael Frenn



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The rhizomes should be stored in the refrigerator until you are ready to plant them (but don't wait long!). When planting time comes, soak them in luke-warm water before planting. Lay the rhizomes on their side being careful not to damage rootlets (if your rhizome has them) or eyelets that are present. Try to spread out the rootlets and eyelets on the (horizontal) level of the rhizome itself if you can. Cover with topsoil to a depth of one to two inches, then cover with loose mulch. Water well and continue watering daily for a week, then frequently enough during the first growing season for the soil to never get dry but not so it remains swampy.



Here are some great ideas for a hop trellis design:  
[www.brewboard.com/index.php?s=f1942980974203803d4e6772010a89c3&showtopic=89185&pid=1065077&st=0&#entry1065077](http://www.brewboard.com/index.php?s=f1942980974203803d4e6772010a89c3&showtopic=89185&pid=1065077&st=0&#entry1065077)

After vines begin to grow, rig up some kind of trellis system for them to attach to. Remember, a hop vine may need as much as 30 feet of vertical support for a single year's growth! It's a good idea before planting to put in one stake (a foot tall, more or less) in the center of the triangle. Behind the triangle, perhaps three feet away, install a pole with a long strand of strong twine attached to the top, long enough to attach to the stake at the bottom when it becomes necessary in a few weeks.

Some varieties of hops will be up and growing within a few days of planting. Others may take four weeks and then, just as you are ready to give up on them, shoots will come up out of nowhere. Generally speaking, your hops should be several inches high by the beginning of summer, provided there has been enough water and the temperature hasn't been too low.

Once the equinox has passed, watch for certain varieties (Cascade, Tettnanger, Chinook) to zoom up the strings at a rate of two to eight inches a day (even more if you treat them to a Drum Circle – I like Clearwater Beach from Duniden Brewery, Fla.). Late in the summer growth

will slow way down and the first flowers will begin to appear, then fill out and mature. Many varieties do not flower at all during their first growing season.

**When to pick?** Varieties will vary, of course, but a general rule of thumb is to check the cones daily:

- **By sight.** They should look uniformly light green to yellow (but no brown!), paper-thin, beginning to separate a bit, with a trace of yellow dust (lupulin) on the stem end of the cone.
- **By touch.** They should feel papery, dry, not quite brittle.
- **By smell.** After squeezing one of the cones, your hands should smell like hops. However, you shouldn't be able to smell the resins from more than a few inches away from the plant.

If they seem ready to pick, pick 'em! Cut the vines down at about the 15-inch line, lay them on a clean, dry surface, and remove all the cones one by one. Warning: It can be a long, tedious job, which requires lots of beer: hefeweizen, cream ale, kolsch are good suggestions. Warning #2: Do not try to pick hops from a vine standing on a ladder if homebrew is going to flow. It is always safer to work on the horizontal than to be on a 10-foot ladder with a mug of beer. You can cut the bines down completely which is safer, but you will have lower yield. If you can harvest only ripe cones, you will get several pickings approximately every two weeks.

Lastly you need to dry the hops. You can be fancy and do it in a dehydrator at 90 to 115 F for several hours, or you can air dry. For this you need a space that is breeze-free, dry, warmish, and vermin-free. Set up a series of window screens or mesh of some kind so that they are horizontal but don't lay on the floor. Place your harvest bounty on the screens, then just leave it. It will take a few days to dry. When the hops are dry, you'll know. They should feel very brittle but still be green, and they should weigh a fraction of what they did when you picked them (so don't get excited over the pound of Cascade flowers you got from the first year's growth because when all is said and done, you may have nothing more than an ounce!). Pack the hops into zippered plastic storage bags, squeezing out every bit of air that you can, label them, and place them in the freezer.



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You don't have to throw away the vines you cut down. Before they dry out they can be woven into very attractive and sturdy wreaths or baskets. If you don't weave and don't know anyone who does, the vines can either be composted to use as mulch for the next planting or dried and burned to create suitable ash to sweeten the holes for the next batch of rhizomes. They also make great decorations for our spot at NCHF!

Last word: After the harvest let the vines grow if they will, but as soon as the first frost comes (or by November) cut them to an inch, fertilize, and mulch for the winter.

Now, go get another beer, perhaps a Double Daddy Double IPA.....

(Editor's note: In our final installment we'll talk about actually using our homegrown bad boys in our beer)

## H.A.Z.E.

### Club Officers for 2008

President:	Dave Pratt
Vice President:	Maddy Franke
Secretary:	Bill Kenney
Treasurer:	Tina Weinrich
Activities Uber-Herr:	Jeff Bunch

## HAZE Happenin's – Upcoming Events

### April 26, 2008, Saturday Light Rail Pubcrawl

Time: 10:00 AM  
 Where: Leave Iron Point Station (located between Iron Point Road and Natoma Station Dr.)  
 Cost: \$5.00 per person for light rail.  
 Cover your own beer and food.  
 Activities: Please, don't make me!

### April 27, 2008, Sunday Last Round of AHA Western Region Judging

Time: 9:30 AM  
 Where: Devil's Canyon Brewing,  
 111 Industrial Way #7 Belmont, Ca.  
 Why: This is the last round of the American Homebrew Association's National Homebrew Competition. This is a great opportunity, especially if you are not a judge. They still need judges. There may be a carpool. Email HAZE if you're thinking about going.

### May 3, 2008, Saturday National Homebrew Day

When: 9:00 AM to 3 PM  
 Where: Morning Glory Fermentation  
 Why: Annual event. The Big Brew System (BBS) will be fired up brewing a Cheswick Bitter in honor of the late and great Michael Jackson, the Beer Hunter. Feel free to bring your system and brew or get a BBS share.

### May 8, 2008, Thursday May Club Meeting - German Beers

When: 7:00 PM  
 Where: At the "Smith"  
 Why: Monthly meeting. We'll be sampling German beers, in particular the Kolsch from those who took a BBS share from the First Annual Snow Brew Day. All other German beers welcome, too.

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## The Beer Traveller

**Wolf Creek Restaurant and Brewery**  
(A Top 10 "Don't Fly To LA" Destination)

It's been awhile since we've had any news under this heading and while travel has been down a bit, plenty of spots have been visited. It's just that no new ones have come our way. However, on a recent trip back from LA I pulled out my trusty *Beer Guppy's Guide to Southern California* to find a potential spot on the way home after a few days of grueling *blah blah blah* sessions. I happened upon the community of Valencia which I've driven through many times but never stopped at since I last went to Magic Mountain in the late 70's.

Aside from the fact that McBean Parkway has odd and even numbers on *both* sides of the street and the street is as *long* as Highway 50 from Placerville to Sacramento, I still recommend you take the 10 minutes off the I-5 to find the place (there's a shorter route I learned later, but I forget the street – sorry! I think it's the first Valencia exit, heading south on I-5). Wolf Creek is located in a nice shopping center and is about one and a half the size of the Placerville Brewing Company. They have a very nice outdoor (covered) seating area in front which is where I am right now (or was when I wrote this). The food menu is varied and reasonably priced. A half tuna sandwich, salad with bleu cheese and a cup of delicious Mexican chicken soup ran about \$8.50

Rob McFerren, owner and brewer was kind enough to spend a few moments with me and even kinder with LOTS of raffle fodder (thanks, Rob!). The brewery celebrated it's 11th year, all at this location, in late March. Their number one seller is Golden Eagle Ale, an American Blond Ale at 4.5%. Rob says he has a lot of customers who have been here from the beginning and started out with this beer, although now they clamor for the IPAs!

Rob likes single hopped beers, and really likes Amarillo for bittering, flavor and late hop. Speaking of hops, he's ok right now with quite a bit of centennial and Amarillo on hand, but hallertau has been harder to get. All of his beers are ales which he crafts on a 10 barrel system with 4 serving tanks. Occasionally he does a big beer like and imperial stout. He usually has 5 or 6 beers: Golden Eagle Ale (a blond), Howlin' Hefeweizen, Yellowstone Wolf pale Ale (dry hopped and 6.2% ABV), Kodiak Red

Ale (a red with heavy toast from an oak bourbon barrel), Desperado IPA (7%) and a seasonal.

Rob was in the aerospace industry and working at TRW in Redondo Beach. His wife, whom he met at the restaurant they were both working at, bought him a homebrew kit 16 years ago, and even the first batch was good! His beer always went really fast among family and friends. He wound up working in a restaurant after the space shuttle explosion because the aerospace industry all but ground to a halt. He started at a Cheesecake Factory restaurant, working his way up from dishwasher to manager. In fact, he managed three of the franchises and opened 5 of them. He really liked the restaurant business (and brewing!) and he and his wife got to talking about a brewpub. So they invested their last dime (they opened with one dollar in the checking account!), found some investment and Small Business Administration money and took the plunge. Rob describes it as "A lotta work, havin' a lotta fun, with a lotta hours." They set out to have a corner pub brewery, and despite being in a shopping center, that's what they've accomplished. Rob rounded his restaurant and homebrew experience with training at the Siebel Institute and working a short time at Goose Island Brewing in Long Island.

Despite never having entered a homebrew competition, he's done very well with his beers. The Golden Eagle has taken many silver awards and the Hefeweizen has taken 2 golds at the State and several silvers, including 4 silvers in a row at LA County. The Imperial Hot Rod IPA took a silver last year at the LA County Fair, besting Stone's Ruination which took the bronze! And IPA was the most entered style.

He does enjoy brewing Belgians from time to time, including dubbels and triples. The dubbel is fairly popular, especially with the ladies! And while IPA has always been his favorite style and he's enjoying brewing Belgians now, he has no favorites – they're all his children! Most importantly, he wouldn't talk anyone out of doing this.

Address:  
North Park Village Square  
27746 North McBean Parkway (east/north side of the street)  
Valencia, Ca. 91354  
661.263.9653

[wolfcreekbrewco.weebly.com](http://wolfcreekbrewco.weebly.com)



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## 10 Reasons NOT To Fly To LA

Ok, aside from the fact that flying is a PITA\* and the obvious "Who in heck wants to go to LA?!", the next time you're thinking about going to say "hi" to Mickey, consider a road trip. Here's why:

First, do the math. I can make it to LA comfortably in about 6 hours. If you fly, you have at least one hour drive to the airport. Another 30 to park and get to checkout, plus they want you there at least an hour ahead. That's 2.5 hours. Figure an hour flight, a half hour to get your luggage and at least half an hour to get either a rental or a shuttle to the hotel. That's 4.5 hours minimum. Plus, if you're going with the family, it's far cheaper to pay gas than a ticket for each person.



[www.sequoiabrewing.com](http://www.sequoiabrewing.com)

So let's do this thing, assuming we're leaving Placerville at 9:30. It will take you about 2 to 2.5 hours to get you to Fresno, just in time for lunch at Sequoia Brewing in Fresno (777 East Olive Ave, 559.264.5521). The beers here are clean, flavorful and true to style. They have a good food menu and reasonable prices. I recommend General Grant ESB on Nitrogen.

After an hour you're back in the car and it's another 2.5 hours (I assume you're driving slower than me 'cause the kids are with you!) over the grapevine to Wolf Creek Brewing in Valencia. If you missed it, there's a great write up a few pages back on this brewpub.

Continuing to LA along I5 take the 210 freeway and head east. In about 30 minutes you'll hit Pasadena, and while there are several places to go, you'll want to duck into Lucky Baldwin's. While it's described as a British Pub and Café, it has a decidedly Belgian flare. You'll normally find 60 plus beers on draft, perhaps a cask offering, and about 300 different bottled selections. They also have



[www.luckybaldwins.com](http://www.luckybaldwins.com)

\* If you need me to explain this you shouldn't be reading this paper!

a number of festivals, including Belgian in February, Barleywine in April and an IPA Festival in July. Plan your trip accordingly.

Next stop, since we're basing this on flying (or not!), is LAX. Here you'll find two Sheraton Hotels. You want the 4 Points (the smaller of the two), not the Gateway. The Four Points was the site of the 2002 AHA Conference and has the distinction as the Beer Hotel.

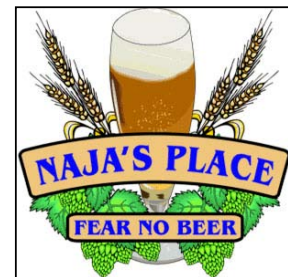
[www.fourpointslax.com/beer.asp](http://www.fourpointslax.com/beer.asp)

They have 6 taps (Hollywood Blond, Spaten, an Amber, a Wit, Racer 5, Chimay Red and Old Rasputin). They also have a very large selection of craft and import beers. Rooms run about \$119 and have the most comfortable beds in the world (save for my Sleep Number®!).

## Get a drink of water

I'm not sure what time it is, but you drove down in the summer so there's plenty of daylight left! From LAX you have several directions to go so we'll head

over to Redondo Beach, just slightly south. Here you'll want to go to Naja's Place on the Boardwalk. Dockside you'll enjoy 77 specialty draft beers (I had a Stone Pale with Saphir hops on cask that was incredible!) and 500 bottled specialties. Often there's a band and there's places for the kids to cruise around (I think). Naja's is at 154 South International Boardwalk, 310.376.9951.



[www.najasplace.com](http://www.najasplace.com)

Next boogie over to Torrance for the Red Car Brewery and Restaurant. This pub will be featured in a later issue, but their beers are really good and the owners have roots in Shingle Springs. They are at 1266 Satori Ave, 310.782.0222. I knew the brewer cared about his beers because he listed FG, OG and IBUs! House beers include a British Pale, a British Mild (slightly hopped), Wheat, IPA, Red Ale and a Porter. Seasonals include an excellent Pumpkin. [www.redcarbrewery.com](http://www.redcarbrewery.com)

## Get another drink of water

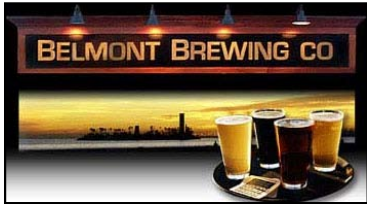


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[www.belmontbrewing.com](http://www.belmontbrewing.com)

Now you're down the 405 to Long Beach for a great time seaside on the patio at Belmont Brewing Company (25 39th Pl. 562.433.3891).

This place has some of the best microbrewed beers you'll taste in LA I recommend the Long Beach Crude Ale, a Foreign Extra Stout weighing in at 6.5%. They also offer a light golden ale, a West coast amber, and a strawberry blond, as well as up to seven seasonals, including a Belgian Strong and a Belgian Pale Ale.

We're going to swing back to Santa Monica where you could choose between Father's Office for world famous killer burgers, or the Library Ale House. I haven't been to the former, so try the Alehouse. You'll find 29 draft beers and 29 more in bottles. The food is good and the prices reasonable. 2911 Main St, Santa Monica, 310.314.4855.



<http://libraryalehouse.com>

*Get one more  
drink of water*



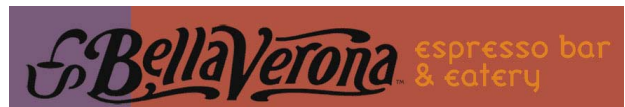
[www.jtschmids.com](http://www.jtschmids.com)

Head now to Disneyland but before you do, catch the tail end of an Angel's game at JT Schmid's Restaurant and Brewery, 2610 East Katella Ave, 714.634.9200. The beer selection here is the most limited of your trip, and occasionally there's a klunker, but the good ones are good. Sports club fair, but no cotton candy or popcorn, get that at Disneyland!

To complete your trip you'll want to stop at Lodi Brewing, 105 S. School St. Here you will find some of the best beer of the trip and more and likely the absolutely best food! Judging for AHA Regionals (West) were held there recently and the lunch they served was incredible. If you go now, get a growler of the Framboise to go, it's outstanding! Lodi is featured on the way home 'cause if you started here you just might not make to LA!



[www.lodibeercompany.com](http://www.lodibeercompany.com)



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