



The Cotton Plant & its Organs

THE PLANT

The word "cotton" is derived from the Arabic word "*al qatan*." No one knows how old the cotton plant is. One of the first archeological discoveries of cotton usage in the world is located in Pakistan at Mohenjo Daro. This site is over 5,000 years old. Present day breeding and selection are a continuation of the domestication process.

The cotton plant is a perennial (lasting many years) tree but has been domesticated to be grown as a pseudo-annual shrub. As a perennial tree, the cotton plant is able to grow year after year, producing flowers and bolls, as long as conditions are suitable for growth. The cotton plant is indeterminate in nature. It will not stop producing flowers and bolls as long as growing conditions are suitable.

The cotton plant has hairs (trichomes) and irregularly dotted pigment glands.

Wild species of cotton generally occur in frost-free areas of the subtropical and tropical regions. Freezing temperatures kill the protoplast of all cultivated species and most wild species. Therefore, cotton is a warm climate crop. It is planted in spring or early summer and harvested in late fall or early winter.

Cotton is a sun-loving plant but not a water-loving plant. Water requirements of cotton depend on weather conditions, but a successful cotton harvest requires at least 75 cm of rain or irrigation water on average. Although cotton is planted in both hemispheres, most of it is cultivated in the Northern Hemisphere. The time of planting in the Northern Hemisphere is the time of harvesting in the Southern Hemisphere. Cotton is primarily grown between 37°N and 32°S; however, its cultivation has been extended to 45°N in China.

Taxonomy

Cotton is a member of the order *Malvales*, family *Malvaceae*. This makes it a relative of such familiar garden plants as the mallow and Rose of Sharon.

COTTON'S FAMILY TREE	
Rank	Main line of descent
Order	Malvales
Family	Malvaceae
Tribe	Gossypieae
Genus	Gossypium