



Plants & Fashion

The people's choice

Cotton

Gossypium spp.

Why it was chosen

The fine fibres produced by the cotton plant provide a wide range of fabrics.

It's no surprise that cotton is widely used in fashion as it is comfortable, strong, absorbent, machine washable, dry cleanable and easy to sew.

More cotton is grown than any other natural fibre in the world, and more is produced than all artificial fibres added together.

What it is

The word 'cotton' comes from the Arabic 'qutun', which is used to describe any fine textile. Cotton seed is contained in a capsule, or boll, and surrounded by white or cream-coloured downy fibres.

After harvesting the fibres are separated from the seeds by a cotton gin (a revolutionary piece of equipment invented by Eli Whitney in 1793) and made into thread.

Where it grows

Cotton is tropical in origin but is now cultivated in over 90 countries, 75 of which are developing nations. Major producers are the United States, China and India.

Did you know?

A revolutionary new kind of natural coloured cotton has been developed. The colour not only doesn't fade, but actually becomes more vibrant with the first few washes!

What the scientists say

Certain insect pests such as the boll weevil specifically attack cotton and can destroy the crop. Plant scientists have improved cotton's resistance to pests. This protects the crop and reduces the need for poisonous insecticides, which is better for the farmers' health and the environment.

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