

Did You Know?



Safflower, *Carthamus tinctorius*

- Safflower produces a thistle like flower ranging in color from yellow to dark red.
- It is one of the oldest cultivated plants, originally grown to use the flowers as coloring agents for food, cosmetics and textiles.
- Safflower garlands were found in Tutankhamum's tomb (around 1323 BCE).
- The pigment from the flower petals is known as carthamin and was used to dye Egyptian textiles dating back to the 12th dynasty.
- As a food additive, carthamin is known as Natural Red 26.
- The flower petals have been substituted for saffron since they do produce a similar color and flavor.
- Commercial production of safflower is primarily for oil pressed from the seeds. By-products of this process create livestock meal and is used in making soap.
- A small amount of commercial grown safflower is for birdseed.
- There are two types of safflower varieties, one produces oil high in concentrations of oleic acid (monounsaturated fatty acids) which are used in salad dressings and soft margarines and must be refrigerated. The other produces high concentrations of linoleic acid (polyunsaturated fatty acids) which is shelf stable and doesn't turn yellow over time. The linoleic acid types are used in high-temperature cooking as well as in the manufacture of paints, stains and linoleum tiles.
- Traditional healers have used safflower worldwide to treat a variety of conditions. Today, research continues, particularly to treat high cholesterol, heart health and in diabetes management.
- Safflower oil is said to improve hair quality and sheen when lightly rubbed into the scalp. It also benefits the skin as an effective moisturizer, and is often added to bath and beauty products.