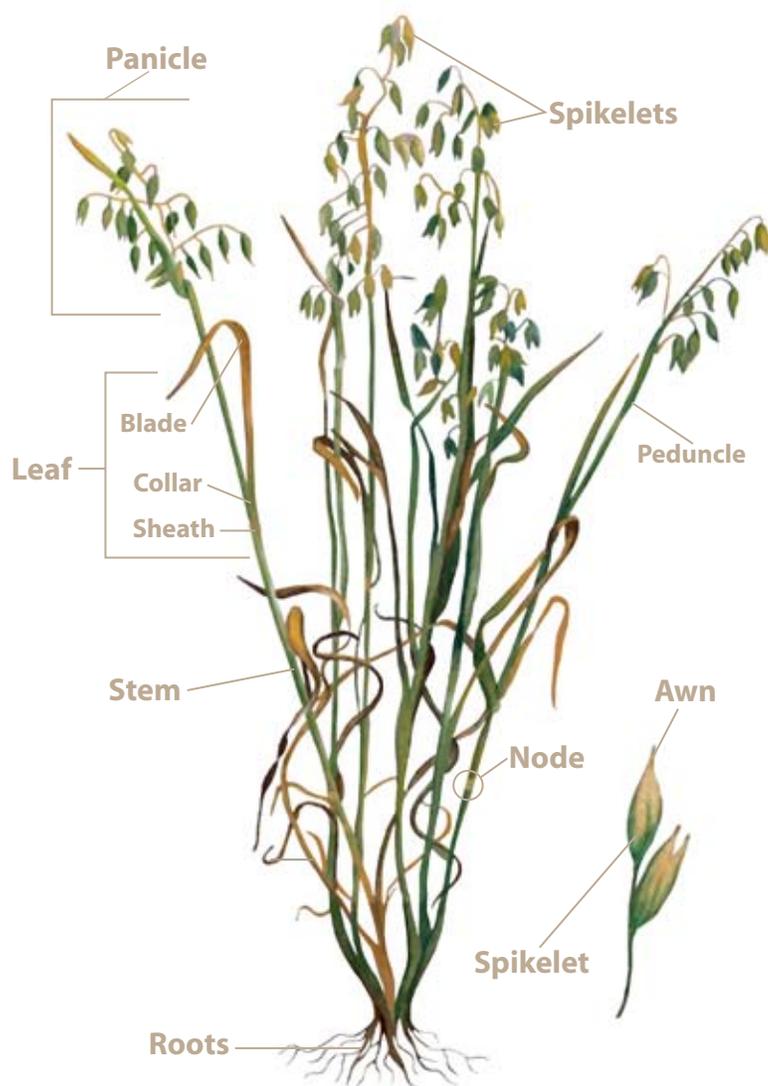




OATS

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On The Front

A. Oat Head

The oat head is a cluster of branches called a panicle. Two or more seeds contained in a spikelet are located at the end of each oat branch.

B. Oat Plant

Like other small grain crops, the oat plant is an annual grass; it produces three to five hollow stems. The stems have seed clusters or flowers on their branches. The plant grows two to three feet tall under normal conditions.

C. Oat Seed

Oat seeds can vary in size. Some varieties have short, plump kernels while others look more like rice and are longer and more slender. A leafy tissue called a hull covers each seed.

Oats

Oats are used for animal feed and for human food. Oats were discovered thousands of years ago in Egypt. They were once considered a weed and were sometimes used in medicines. The crop became popular with farmers because it is easy to grow, harvest and feed to animals. In the mid-1800s, oatmeal began to gain importance as a breakfast food. Since then, more oat products have been developed and their nutritional qualities are popular among health-conscious people.

Adaptation

Many producers choose to grow oats because they fit into most crop rotations, do well on a wide range of soil types and help protect land from soil loss. Major oat producing states are Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin.

Planting

Oats are usually planted after corn or soybeans. A machine called a grain drill is used to plant most oats. The seeds are planted between one-and-a-half to two inches deep. Spring oats are planted as early as March. Fall oats, grown farther south in the United States, are planted between October and December.

Harvest

Most oats grown in the United States are harvested for grain with a machine called a combine. Oats also can be cut at the dough stage for hay and fed to animals. At this stage, the oat seeds feel like dough when they are rolled in the hand. Oats cut at the milk stage are used as a wet feed, or silage, for animals. Oat seeds at the milk stage are filled with a milky fluid.

Milling

Like other grains, oats must go through a process called milling before they can be used for human food products. When oats arrive at the mill, they are cleaned to remove other seeds, weeds and sticks. Next, they are dried and the hulls are removed. Then they are cut, flaked or ground into flour.