

6 FUN FACTS ABOUT COTTON

MOST BANKNOTES ARE MADE USING COTTON

Many people think banknotes (money) are made of paper. In fact, if banknotes were made with paper, you wouldn't be able to use the notes if they got wet. Most countries use cotton for making banknotes, including the USA which uses a mixture of 75 percent cotton and 25 percent linen to make cash.

COTTON HAS BEEN USED FOR 7,000 YEARS

Scientists have found bits of cotton bolls and pieces of cotton cloth at least 7,000 years old in Mexico. In Pakistan, cotton was being grown, spun and woven into cloth around 3,000 BC. Arab merchants brought cotton cloth to Europe about 800 AD. By 1500, cotton was known throughout the world.

THERE ARE 50 NATURAL SPECIES OF COTTON

There are 50 cotton species, but only four have been domesticated for their fiber. These four varieties are the only ones that have the fiber length or oil content levels that justify large scale cultivation and processing. Two are from the Americas, one from southern Africa and one from India. Cotton derived from *Gossypium hirsutum* in Mexico, accounts for about 90% of all cotton production.

IT WAS THE FIRST PLANT TO GROW ON THE MOON

The Chinese spacecraft Chang'e 4 took cotton seeds to the far side of the moon. According to China, cottonseed from that batch sprouted in January 2019 inside the spacecraft in the Von Kármán Crater of the moon. Sadly, the plants died from the cold of the moon shortly afterwards.

COTTON IS STRONGER WHEN WET

While other cellulosic fibers (rayon, wood pulp) lose strength when wet, cotton becomes stronger when it is wet. The hydrogen atoms in water create extra bonds with the cellulose in cotton, increasing the strength of the cotton.

COTTON PLANTS PRODUCE FRUIT

Once a cotton plant flowers and is pollinated, it produces a fruit called a boll. The boll is a hard capsule with fiber and seeds inside. When the fruit is ripe, the boll splits open revealing the fluffy stuff we know as cotton. Cotton flowers are also quite beautiful.