Cotton Information

Harvesting Cotton:
Hand picking vs. machine

Handpicking:
• Pick bolls one plant at a time
• Takes 9 minutes to pick 20 plants
• Pick 8 to 10 hours a day
• Food and water used as fuel.
• Can pick 1/9 of a pound per minute

Machine picking:
• Picks four rows of plants at a time
• Takes 30 seconds to pick 1200 plants
• Can pick 24 hours a day
• Uses gasoline for fuel.
• Can pick 100,000 to 190,000 pounds per day

Cotton Gin:
• Eli Whitney patented the cotton gin in 1794.
• 50 pounds of seedless cotton could be produced by one person in one day compared to one pound per person before invention.
• Someone broke into workshop and stole machine and copied enough not to infringe on patent laws.
• Government did not renew patent in 1807. Whitney never got rich from his invention.

Ginned Cotton:
• Ginned cotton is pressed by machines into bales held together by bands.
• A bale weighs 480-500 pounds. It is 55 inches tall, 21 inches wide, and 28 inches thick.
• All ginned cotton is classified. Cotton classification depends on things such as fiber length, color, leaf grade, extraneous matter, etc.
• Cotton is priced according to its classification.

Cottonseed Huller
• Invented in 1857 by William Fee of Cincinnati
• Cottonseed oil became profitable after the Civil War.

History:
• Evidence to suggest that cotton was cultivated very early in two areas of the world. Bits of woven cloth have been found in Peru, Mexico, Pakistan, and India. Speculation is that cotton grew wild in these two widely separated areas of the world 5,500 years ago.
**Location:**
- The climate is right for cotton growth from the latitudes 45 degrees north to 30 degrees south of the equator.
- This circle is called the Cotton Belt
- Cotton is produced in large quantities by many countries
- China produces the most followed by the United States
- Cotton began being cultivated in the United States in the 1600s.
- Cotton is grown in the following states: **Southeast:** North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, and Virginia. **Mid-South:** Missouri, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Kansas. **Southwest:** Oklahoma, and Texas. **West:** California, Arizona, and New Mexico.

**Cotton Plant:**
- The cotton plant takes about 25 weeks to mature.
- It is a bush that can grow as tall as 5 feet. It has numerous branches that go in all directions. Leaves have 3 to 5 lobes.
- It bears a creamy white flower that turns purple two days after opening then falls off.
- Once fiber in the boll is mature, the plant cuts off the water supply and the boll dries, cracks, and splits open to expose the lint and seeds to the sun.
- The bur is the dried split open boll.
- Each bur contains 3 to 5 “locks” of cotton.
- Each boll can contain as many as 50 to 60 seeds.

**Cotton Products**
- **Lint:** clothes, bedding, sleeping bags, draperies, tablecloths, thread, yarn, rope, money, maps, etc.
- **Seeds:**
  - **Linters:** cushioning, adhesives, medical cotton, q-tips, cellophane, mattresses, mops, weatherproof material, etc.
  - **Hulls:** paper, explosives, mulch, animal feed, plastics, etc.
  - **Seed oil and meal:** salad oil, margarine, soap, paint, cosmetics, fertilizer, animal feed, etc.
- Even trash that comes out of the cotton when it is ginned is composted and used in the fields to improve soil. Cotton stalks are also shredded and plowed back into the soil.