

The Secrets of Saffron







Crocus *sativus*

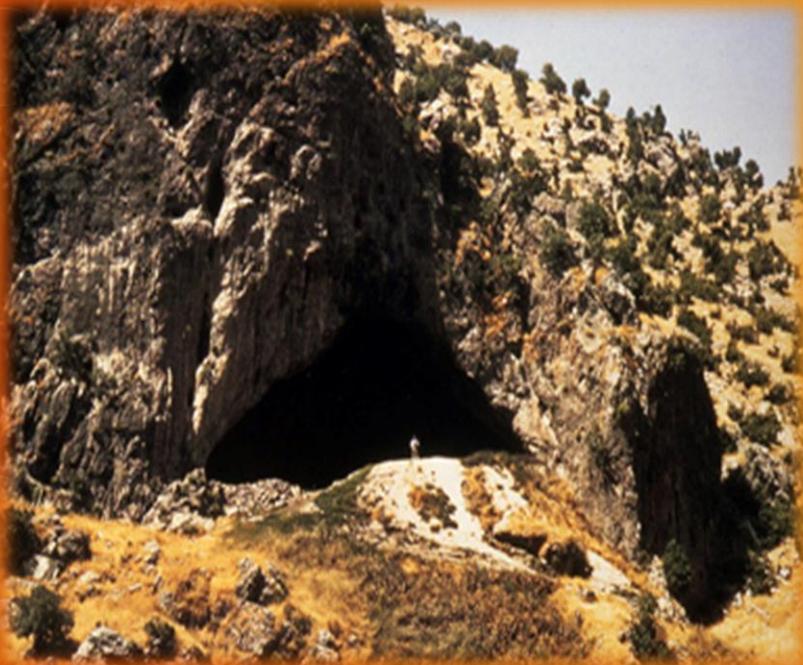
- Family: Iridaceae
- Origin: Probably Eastern Greece or Crete
- Height: 3" – 6"
- Flowering: autumn
- Perennial corm
- 5 cultivars around the world





Origin predates the Bible:

Example of caves in Iraq



Traces of saffron are found on the walls of Iraqi caves and in tattered threads pulled from disintegrating carpets and funeral shrouds of the ancient Persian court.



Xeste 3

Entrance to the
cave



Fresco of Women Gathering Saffron
found on Minoan Crete – Xeste 3 caves
1600 – 1500 B.C.

A rendering of
The Mistress of
Animals (on the
throne)



Close up of the
mistress

The blue monkeys
of Crete



Cleopatra

Used saffron in her warm bath because of the coloring and cosmetic properties. History says she also used saffron before encounters with men, thinking the scent would be enchanting.



To the nations of Eastern Asia, Saffron's **yellow** dye was the perfection of beauty and its odour a perfect ambrosia.

.....Maude Grieve

A Modern Herbal

Saffron yellow formed part of the dress and shoes of the Persian Kings.



Medieval European illuminated manuscripts such as this:
13th Century depiction of Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Becket's assassination.

Dyes of saffron were often used to provide hues of yellow and orange.



Culpeper's Complete Herbal

'It is an herb of the Sun, and under the Lion. Saffron is endowed with great virtues, for it refreshes the spirits, and is good against fainting-fits and the palpitation of the heart'.....A.D. 1653



Women in France have known the secrets of saffron since the 13th century



CA 1440 - Paris



England

Saffron grew well in the north Essex countryside. Chipping Walden changed the town's name to Saffron Walden to show the importance of the crop to the local area. The town's coat of arms features the crocus in its design.



Visit Saffron Walden



Throughout the ages, saffron has been used to dye cloth.



Men's Léine or Saffron Shirt

Cotton



Wool

Cloth dyed with saffron – notice the colors!



Silk

Irish Bagpiper with his saffron colored kilt.



Young Buddhist monks in India wearing various shades of saffron shirts.



What does saffron mean?

It's possible that crocus comes from the Sumerian tribes of the Middle East, evolving via the Arabic word;

sahafarn- meaning thread and

Za'faran-meaning yellow.

It's all in a name.

Spanish – azafran

French – Safran

Italian – Zafferano

Portuguese – agafrão

Swedish – Saffran

German – Saffran

Finnish – Saframi

Hungarian – Safrany

Russian – Shafran

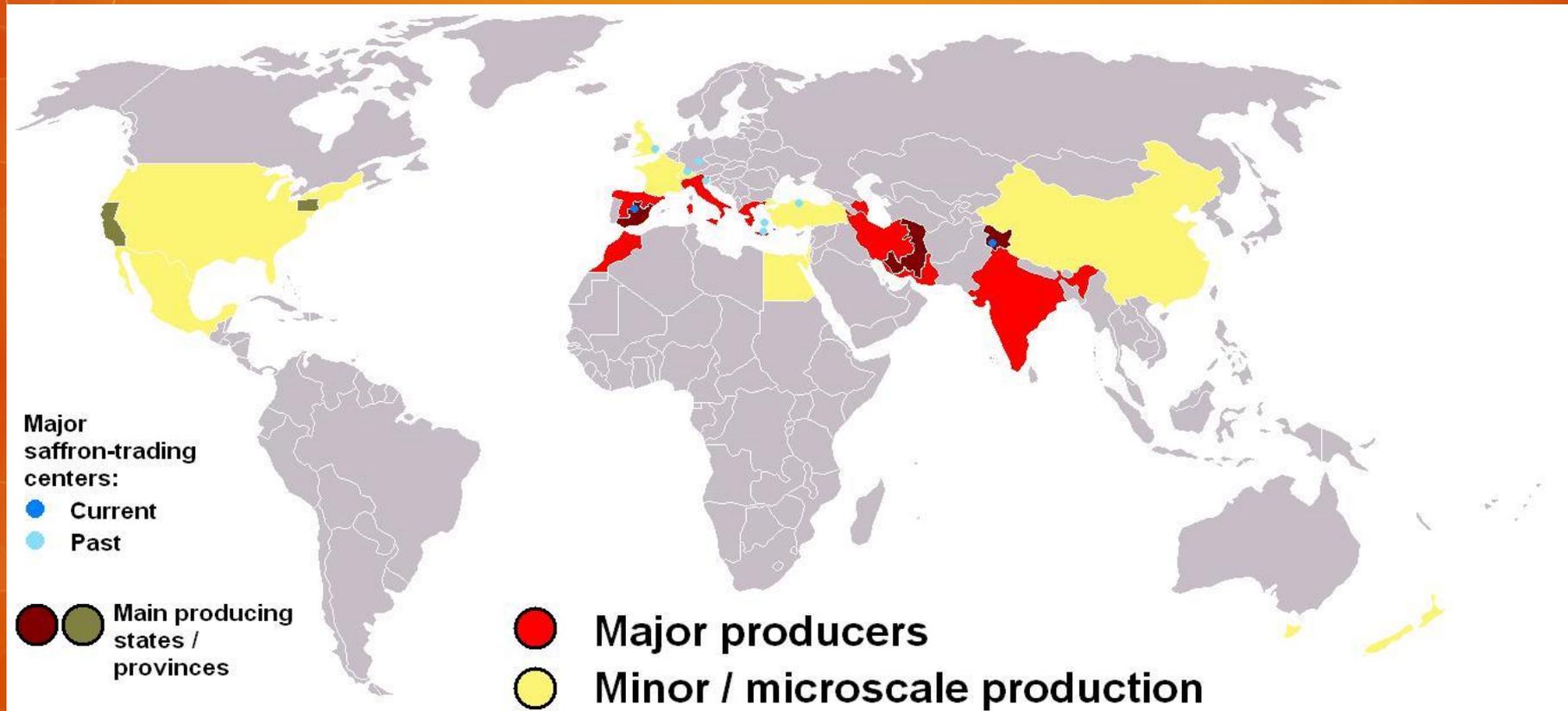
Arabic – zaFraran

Hindi – kesar

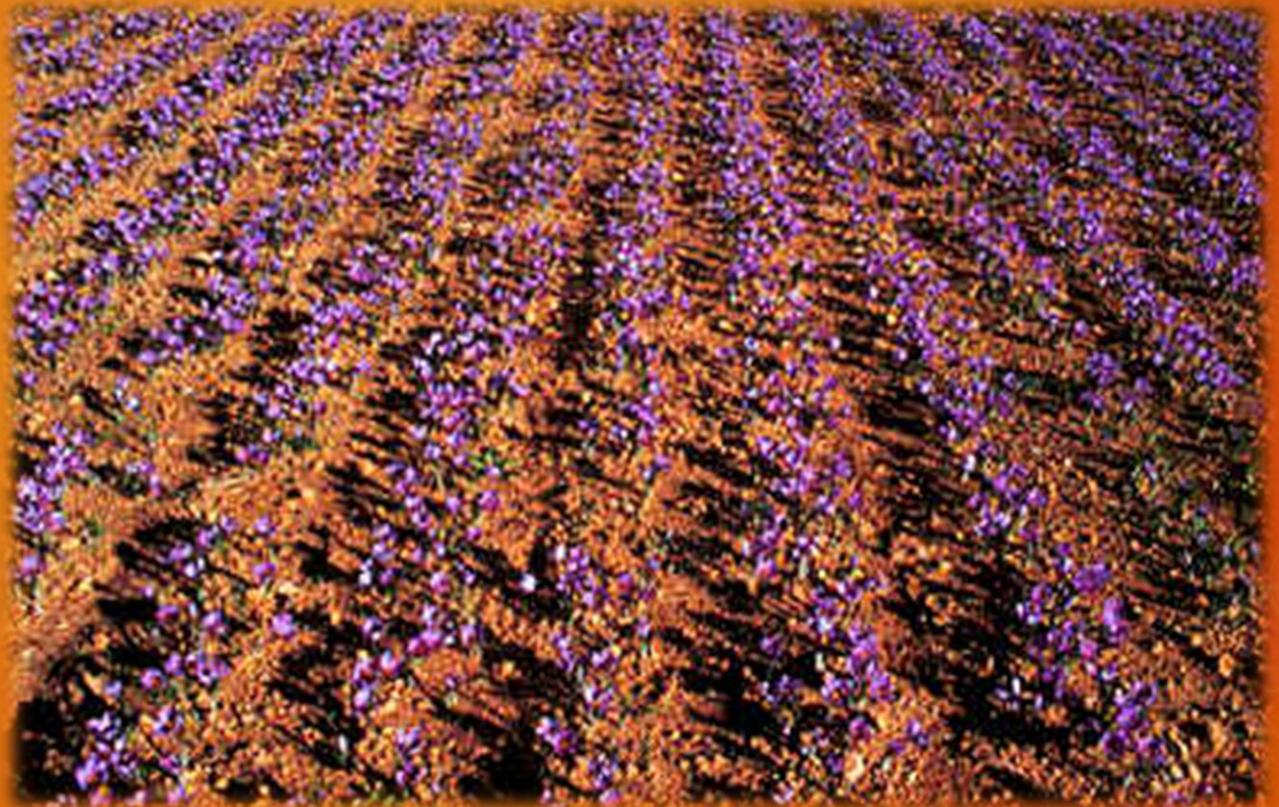
Chinese – Fan nung hua

Japanese - safuran

World Saffron Cultivation



Why is Saffron the most expensive spice in the World?



Each corm is planted by hand.



Saffron crops mature within 4-6 weeks in the autumn.

Flowers must be gathered in a day, by hand, when they are open and ready to be harvested. Some fields are harvested day and night until the field is bare of blooms.



Each flower is gathered by hand!



Harvest Day in Italy





Dehydrating filaments in Italy





Each thread is hand counted and packaged for sale.



The petals of the plant are fed to the livestock.



NOTE: New research available on the uses of the petal

Saffron Grower in Navelli, Italy



'By tradition we don't eat it, it has always been what buys our children shoes.'

Valentino Di Marzio,
President of Saffron Growers
in Navelli.

The saying goes~ at
Christmas Mass you know
who had a good saffron
season~ you can smell it on
their overcoats.

The spice is traditionally
stored in the closet or
armoire.





This plant is not saffron, but is often sold as the real thing!
Carthamus tinctorius- Safflower



Safflower

Mexican Saffron
is not authentic
Saffron!

Use caution
with your
purchase



Saffron Uses:



Food adventures around the world

Sweden – St. Lucia Buns

British – Saffron Cake

France – bouillabaisse

Italy – Risotto

Spain – Paella

Pennsylvania Dutch – Chicken
and Noodles



Saffron Perfume!



Saffron Liqueurs





Wooden carved saffron storage eggs from Pennsylvania Dutch famous wood carver, Joseph Lehn from 19th century. American saffron survived cultivation into modern times mainly in Lancaster County.



Medicinal uses of saffron

Avicenna (980-1037 AD) – mentioned saffron used as a heart tonic, eye strengthener, aphrodisiac, digestive and anti-inflammatory

14th century saffron was of importance for the treatment of the Black Death

1921 – England – a witness testified the use of saffron 'tea' flavored with brandy was used in cases of measles.

Study continues today for the uses in; depression, arthritis, Alzheimer's, appetite suppression, inflammation and much more..... stay tuned!

It is the policy of The Herb Society of America not to advise or recommend herbs for medicinal or health use. Please consult a health care provider before pursuing any herbal treatments.



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Saffron Workshop
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Happy Spring!!!



Saffron Peeps