



Saffron By the Numbers

Margaret Skinner, Bruce L. Parker & Arash Ghalegholabbehbahani
North American Center for Saffron Research & Development
The University of Vermont
661 Spear St., Burlington, Vermont USA 05405-0105



The University of Vermont

Phone (802) 656-5440 Fax (802) 656-5441

<https://www.uvm.edu/~Saffron/>

January 28, 2020

How many corms do I need to plant an acre?

The general recommended planting density is 6-12 corms per sq ft. An acre is 43,560 sq. ft. Assuming one quarter of a field is taken up by aisles (~10,890 sq ft.), that leaves around 32,670 sq ft. for planting. Therefore, it would take around **196,000-400,000 corms** to plant one acre.

How many flowers does it take to make a gram of saffron?

It all depends on the weight of the stigmas, which vary depending on their length and density. Usually one saffron flower produces 0.006 grams of dry saffron. Therefore, it would take around **167 flowers** to make 1 gram of dry saffron.

How many flowers are produced from an individual saffron corm?

The number of flowers depends on the size of the corm, when it was planted, and the growing conditions. In the first year after planting in Vermont, usually only 50% of the corms produce any flowers. Bigger corms produce more flowers than small ones. In future years, one large corm can produce **2-4 flowers** if conditions are right.

How long does it take to harvest 100 flowers?

It all depends on the person picking it, but we found that on average, it takes around **13 minutes** to pick 100 flowers. After the first year of production, when a saffron bed becomes established, most flowers are produced over a few days or weeks. Some growers only pick the flowers during peak blooming period because it is more efficient in terms of time.

How long does it take to separate the stigmas from 100 flowers?

This also depends on the person, but we found that on average, it takes around **23 minutes** to separate the stigmas from 100 flowers. After the first year of production, when a saffron bed becomes established, most flowers are produced over a few days or weeks. Some growers only pick the flowers during peak blooming period because it is more efficient in terms of time.

How many years do saffron corms remain in the same planting bed?

Growers who cultivate saffron for the spice usually keep the corms in the same bed for at least **4 years**. Each year the number of corms, and thus the yield, increases. After 3-6 years yield begins to decrease because the corms are too dense within the bed. Growers need to assess yield annually to determine when it begins to drop. That is when the corms should be dug up and replanted in a new location. If saffron is grown solely to produce corms, they are dug up as soon as they go dormant within the first year of planting.

How much money can I make if I grow 1 acre of saffron?

Revenues from saffron vary widely depending on annual yield and the retail price of saffron. However, we estimate that a grower could gross as much as **\$100,000** from 1 acre, assuming a retail price of \$19/gram.

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If you have additional questions, contact Margaret Skinner at miskinner@uvm.edu.

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