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Amaranth Production

CURRENT TOPIC

By Preston Sullivan, NCAT Agriculture Specialist
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Amaranth has been grown as a vegetable, as an ornamental, and as a grain crop—depending on the variety. This publication will deal primarily with grain amaranth.


http://agronomy.ucdavis.edu/gepts/pb143/crop/amaranth/amaranth.htm

Amaranth grain can be popped, flaked, or ground into a high-protein flour. Currently in the U.S., more than 40 products contain amaranth grain in one form or another. The crop is well adapted to the midwestern and western U.S. It is drought tolerant and is best planted during late spring. Since the seeds are very tiny, some growers use insecticide boxes on their drills or planters to plant amaranth. Others use a vegetable seeder. The grain is harvested with a combine. Typical yields from amaranth range from 600 to 1,200 pounds per acre.

An organization called The Amaranth Institute (1) is made up mostly of growers, researchers, and marketers. The Institute promotes and supports amaranth production, science, and marketing. They hold an annual meeting complete with displays, presentations, and field tours. Membership in the organization is $10.00 per year (check payable to Amaranth Institute) and includes their newsletter, *Legacy*, which is published on an occasional basis. Back issues are available for $3 each for members and $5 each for non-members or free on-line at: http://www.ars-grin.gov/nc7/Reports_New/Reports.html. These issues contain a wealth of information, contacts, and lists of other resources.

The Jefferson Institute (2), located in Columbia, Missouri, serves as a clearinghouse for information and provides direct technical assistance for farmers interested in new crops. Amaranth is one of the crops they help farmers get started with. Their staff of five people makes farm visits and provides production and marketing information. They have a four-page guide on amaranth, which is enclosed and is also available at their Web site (2).

The University of Nebraska has produced an *Amaranth Production Manual for the Central United States* (3), which contains information on field preparation, seed sources, planting, production methods, weed control, harvest, marketing, and more. The title page and table of contents are enclosed to

provide more information. See reference (3) for ordering information. They sponsored a two-day conference on amaranth as a new crop alternative in August of 2003, at Ames, Iowa.

The price in July of 2003 for organically grown amaranth was 65–75¢ / pound. It is wise to start by contacting a grain broker or trader to state how much grain you will have at a certain time and an expected price. It may also be useful to contact health food companies that use amaranth and see whether they forward contract grain. Get any contracts with a buyer in writing.

Markets for grain amaranth are limited, making its production risky. It is best to have a market locked in before planting. Since the demand is small, only a few hundred acres of new amaranth can add enough additional supply to depress prices. It is also beneficial to have storage capacity to hold grain if buyers become scarce. For marketing information, request the ATTRA publication *Marketing Organic Grains*.

David Brenner (4) of Iowa State University has compiled a partial listing of commercial amaranth seed sources, growers selling seed, and sources of information on amaranth, which is enclosed. Seed sources are also listed in the Nebraska production manual (3).

References

1) Amaranth Institute (for memberships)
c / o Jefferson Institute
601 Nifong Blvd., Suite 1D
Columbia, MO 65203
573-449-3518
E-mail: rmyers@tranquility.net
http: / / www.jeffersoninstitute.org

2) Jefferson Institute
601 Nifong Blvd., Suite 1D
Columbia, MO 65203
573-449-3518
E-mail: rmyers@tranquility.net
http: / / www.jeffersoninstitute.org

3) *Amaranth Production Manual for the Central United States.* To order this publication send $6 (checks payable to University of Nebraska) to:
David Baltensburger
4502 Avenue I
Scottsbluff, NE 69361
308-632-1261

4) David Brenner
Plant Introduction Station
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E-mail: dbrenner@iastate.edu
http: / / www.ars-grin.gov / nc7

Enclosures

Baltensperger, David D., et al. 1995. Amaranth Grain Production in Nebraska. NebFacts. NF 91–35. 4 p. http://www.ianr.unl.edu/pubs/fieldcrops/nf35.htm

Brenner, David. 2003. Partial list of amaranth and chenopodium sources. 5 p.

Myers, Robert L. 1999. Grain Amaranth. Published by the Jefferson Institute, Columbia, MO. 4 p.

Sooby, Jane, et al. 1998. Amaranth production manual for the central United States. University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension Service. EC 98-151-S. Title page and table of contents.

Weibye, Cheryl. 1990. Amaranth: High-protein emergency forage. Hay & Forage Grower. August. p. 8, 11.

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The Electronic version of Amaranth Production is located at:
HTML:
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