

## PLANT FACT SHEET

### Broom Corn (*Sorghum vulgare*) Fact Sheet



Broom corn (*Sorghum vulgare*) is a variety of sorghum that unlike other sorghum varieties produces heads with fibrous seed branches up to 36" long. Broom corn is an annual plant and grows best in full sunlight.

Originally used to make brooms and whisks, it is now popular with crafters who because of its strong stem and colorful seeds use it in many different ways including wreaths, decorative wall hangings, bouquets and even brooms!

Broom corn grows up to 15 ft tall and has woody stalks with dry pith and 8 to 15 nodes and leaves above the ground. The fibers, usually 12 to 24 in.

long, are branched toward the tip, and the flowers and seeds are borne at the tips of the small branches. The seeds are brown, broadly boat-shaped and enclosed in tan, reddish tan or brown, pubescent glumes.

Broom corn can be grown virtually through the USA and will produce a fair quality of brush wherever temperatures are high enough for corn to grow well. As such, broom corn is a relatively hardy plant that tolerates heat and drought and is relatively easy to grow.

However, the best brush is produced in areas where with warm summers and moist, fertile soils. While deep alluvial soils generally produce high quality brush yields, broom corn can also be grown on rich bottom lands and sandy uplands. Regardless of the soil type it does need to be well worked prior to planting.

Broom corn is best planted sometime between May 1st and June 15th. However, you need to be certain that the chances for frost are zero. In humid regions, broom corn should be planted in 36" to 40" rows, with the seed spaced at 3". In drier areas a thinner stand is required and the seed should be spaced between 6" and 9". Germination time is around 10 days, depending on local conditions and the plant will achieve maturity in roughly 15 weeks.

Just before reaching maturity Broom corn brush changes color from pale yellow to light green. Harvesting needs to occur when the entire brush is green. If it is harvested too early, i.e. while the lower ends are still yellow, the bottom fibers will be weak. Likewise, if left too long the brush will begin to turn a red color and become less flexible. This generally occurs 4-5 days after the proper harvesting time.

Once harvested the brush can be dried by simply hanging it upside down. When the broom corn has dried it's ready for broom making or anything else your creative mind wishes.