



Box 42131  
TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY  
LUBBOCK, TX 79409-2131  
PHONE: 806-742-2816 FAX: 806-742-2880  
E-MAIL: COTTONLINK@TTU.EDU  
WWW.COTTONLINK.ORG

## HARVEST

### DEFINITION

Harvesting is an important part in the life of cotton. Traditionally done by hand, cotton is now harvested using mechanical means. As the technology of these methods improve, so does the efficiency of harvesting.

### DETAILS

- Cotton can be harvested by a machine called a cotton picker, which uses rotating spindles to separate the seed from the plant without damaging the plant itself. Doffers remove the seed from the spindles and drop it into a conveying system. Special varieties of picker cotton must be planted to use this type of harvesting machine however.
- Cotton striping machines are another way to harvest cotton. These machines use rollers with brushes and bats to strip the entire open cotton bolls off the plants and into the conveyor.
- Another type of mechanical harvesting system uses a broadcast attachment.
- All mechanical harvesting machines use air to raise the cotton into a basket which stores it until it is ready to be placed in a module builder or trailer.
- Once cotton is harvested, it is stored in the field in modules to protect the fiber from weather and pests. A typical sized module holds approximately 13 to 15 bales of ginned cotton.
- Just as cotton planting spans period of a few months depending on its location in Texas, so does harvesting. Farmers in the warmer climates of South Texas are the first to plant and also the first to harvest, usually beginning in July. Farmers in Northern Texas will usually harvest well into November.
- Approximately two thirds of just harvested cotton is seed, which will be separated out at the gin.
- Harvest aids may be applied to crops to aid in machine harvest. These chemicals cause the cotton plants to defoliate, preparing them for machine harvesting. Care must be taken to apply these chemicals at the appropriate time so the plants are not harmed.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- Please see the CottonLink Contact Directory, to find plant and soil science specialists, extension agents and specialists, and other cotton organizations representatives for harvesting information.

### STORY IDEAS

- Cotton harvesting methods in your local area
- Local harvesting schedules, estimates, etc.
- Interview farmers in your area about their preferred harvesting means, predictions, etc.

### IMPACT

- In 2005, 13.5 million acres of Upland cotton was harvested in the U.S.
- In 2006, the number of acres of Upland cotton harvested in the U.S. totaled only 12.4 million.
- In 2005, 5.6 million acres of Upland cotton was harvested in Texas.
- In 2006, a similar decrease in the number of acres of Upland cotton-harvested was also seen in Texas with a harvest total of 4.1 million acres

RELEASED: JUNE 18, 2007  
COMPILED BY: COURTNEY GIBSON