Even after 8,000 years, cotton remains the most miraculous fiber under the sun. Noted for its versatility, appearance, performance and comfort, cotton provides thousands of useful products and creates millions of jobs as it moves year after year from field to fabric.

The journey from field to fabric begins after land is cleared and precision planters place cottonseed in the soil at a uniform depth and interval. The journey ends with textile manufacturers constructing cotton fabrics used to create fashionable cotton clothing and home furnishings.

Cotton planting begins as early as February in South Texas and as late as June in northern areas of the Cotton Belt. Seedlings emerge from the soil within one to two weeks after planting. Growers cultivate the rows of young cotton to provide a 6-to-8 week weed-free period following planting.

Cotton minimizes ground water contamination, adapts to poor soils and is an efficient user of fertilizer. Cotton generates more dollars per gallon of water than any other field crop.

Most U.S. cotton is grown on rain moisture, but supplemental irrigation systems using equipment such as the center pivot have helped increase acreage and stabilize yields.

Squares or flower buds form on the cotton plants four to six weeks after the seedlings have emerged. Creamy to dark yellow blossoms that appear on the cotton plant three weeks after the buds form eventually turn pink and then dark red before falling off. After the bloom falls off, a tiny ovary left on the cotton plant ripens and enlarges into a pod called a cotton boll.

Cotton bolls open 50 to 70 days after bloom, letting air in to dry the white, clean fiber and fluff it for harvest. After leaves are removed to minimize staining of the lint, the mature seed cotton is ready to be harvested. Cotton is entirely machine harvested in the U.S., beginning in July in South Texas and in October in more northern areas of the Belt. Cotton in some areas of Texas and Oklahoma is gathered by stripper harvesters which pluck the entire bolls from the cotton plant rather than picking the fiber from the bolls.

About 78 percent of harvested cotton in the U.S. is now formed into modules, covered with water resistant tarps and stored in the field until it can be ginned.

At many gins, cotton enters module feeders, which fluff up the cotton prior to conveyance to cleaners. Some gins use vacuum pipes to convey the cotton to cleaning equipment where foreign matter is removed. After the cleaning stage, cotton is conveyed to gin stands where revolving circular saws pull the lint through closely-spaced ribs that prevent the seed from passing through. Some of today's high-capacity gins can turn out in one hour as many as 60 500-pound bales of lint -- the term used for fiber after the seeds have been removed at the gin.

Seed removed from the cotton at the gin is crushed in order to extract the oil from the meal and hulls which are used separately and in combination as livestock, poultry and fish feed and as fertilizer.

Cottonseed oil, used primarily as a cooking oil, shortening and salad dressing, is used extensively in the preparation of such snack foods as crackers, cookies and chips.

Packaged bales of lint are stored in warehouses until time for shipment to U.S. or foreign textile mills. After the lint is baled, samples taken from each bale are classed with the aid of U.S. Department of Agriculture instruments according to fiber strength, staple length, length uniformity, grade and fineness. Human evaluation is also used in the classing process, and once classed, cotton is ready for sale.

The opening of cotton bales at the textile mill is fully automated, and lint from several bales is combined to form a uniform blend of fiber. Carding machines separate and align the fibers into a thin web which is condensed into a rope-like strand. Drawing frames provide additional blending and pull the soft rope thinner.

High speed open-end spinning machines further draw out and twist the strand making it tighter and thinner until it reaches the thickness or count needed for weaving or knitting.

A combing machine further cleans and straightens the fibers in preparation for ring spinning high quality yarns. In ring spinning, roving frames draw the cotton rope out even more thinly and insert the first twist.

Ring spinning machines pull the roving finer, add twist and wind the yarn onto bobbins. After spinning, the yarns are tightly wound around tubes and are ready for fabric forming.

Some yarn is dyed before being woven or knitted into cloth and is used in producing gingham checks, plaids, woven stripes and some denim constructions. Thousands of cotton yarns laid side by side on large steel spools are treated prior to weaving. Looms weave the yarn into fabric by interlacing the lengthwise yarns (warp) and the crosswise yarns (filling). Pad-batch dyeing on cotton cloth is similar to printing on paper. Knitting machines may use more than 2,500 needles in producing a wide variety of fabrics and shapes. Garments are inspected before they leave the textile mill.

Men's and boys' trousers (including jeans) and shorts are the top apparel market for cotton, followed by men's and boys' shirts and towels and washcloths.

Demand for denim jeans has helped cotton achieve a 65 percent share of the total apparel market.
Wildflower exhibit:
Special feature during this year’s Standard Flower Show

Sheila Saunders and Ruthie Evans, president and vice-president, respectively of the Pine Prairie Garden Club, will present a wildflower exhibit in Division III, the special exhibits division when the Magnolia Garden Club of Ville Platte stages a Standard Flower Show Cotton Festival weekend, October 11-12, 1997.

“When Corine Roberie, flower show schedule chairman, invited us to participate, we were reluctant,” said Ruthie Evans. “But as she explained, it really became interesting and challenging,” adds Sheila Saunders.

The purpose of Division III of the Standard Flower Show is to instruct and inform the public on goals and National Council of State Garden Club objectives which are:
1. To aid in protection and conservation of natural resources, promote civic beauty, encourage improvement of roadsides and parks.
2. To encourage, and assist in establishing and maintaining botanical gardens and other horticultural centers for advancement of science, enjoyment and education of public.
3. To study and advance arts of gardening, horticulture, floral design, landscape designs, and environmental sciences.
4. To cooperate with other organizations in furtherance of foregoing objectives, by activities as may be determined by the Board of Directors of NCSGC.
5. To further horticultural education, conservation, and landscape design through gift scholarships.

“What will be the wildflowers in your exhibit?” Corine Roberie inquired. The response was that the entire exhibit will have been collected in the Paroona Prairie area of Evangeline Parish, where as in other parts of the parish, there is interesting diversity of native flora.

Thank goodness for the assistance of Dawn Allen Newman, botanist and secretary of Friends of the Louisiana State Arboretum, the correct botanical name is provided with each plant specimen in the educational exhibit.

Cotton Festival Art Show announced

The 1997 Cotton Festival Art Show, sponsored by the Evangeline Art Association, is set for October 11 and 12, at the American Security Bank Civic Room, located at 126 East Main Street in Ville Platte.

The show will be held from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on October 11, and from 10 a.m. to parade time on Sunday, October 12. A reception is planned for Thursday, October 9, from 6:30-8 p.m.

Entries will be accepted at the bank civic room on Friday, October 3, from 10 a.m. till 2 p.m. and on Saturday, October 4, from 9 a.m. till noon. There will be a section for students, novices, and professionals. All media will be accepted, including photography. All works must be framed and ready to hang with wire hangers or they will not be accepted. Each person can enter up to five art works.

Divisions are:
Division I - Art; Division II - Novice (less than five years experience), Division III - Children's Art, and Division IV - Photography. Entry fee is $5 for each division. The show is open to members and non-members of the Art Association and only original work which has not been shown previously in a Cotton Festival Show will be accepted. Maximum size is 50 inches.

The Association reserves the right to reject work because of improper hanging facility, size, or suitability for family viewing.

In the media division, there are no separate categories. All art will be judged together. In photography black and white, and color photos will be judged separately.

Any art work or photograph that is not ready to hang will not be accepted. A “People’s Choice” ribbon will also be awarded in each of the two divisions.

Don’t forget to visit The Cotton Festival Art Show this weekend in Ville Platte.
Standard Flower Show:
Magnolia Garden Club to stage 43rd annual event

Time Marches On! It is marching right into October and Cotton Festival weekend. The Magnolia Garden Club will stage its 43rd annual fall Standard Flower Show, going back to 1954 when the theme was “The Land of Cotton.” the 1997 theme of the flower show is “Il Sont Partis, Avec Coton!”

The gumbo of themes thru the years, identifying classes in Division II, Designs are:
- Class I 1954 “The Land of Cotton”
- Class II 1960 “Autumn’s Bounty”
- Class III 1967 “Music Makes the World Go Round”
- Class IV “1993 Of Our Treasured Trees and You”
- Class V 1994 “The Untamed Beauty of Wildflowers”

Division III Special Exhibits, Section A Youth:
- Class I 1977 “Joy of Nature”
- Class II 1986 “Celebrate Ville Platte”
- Class III 1979 “Beauty is Where You Find It”

The flower show is the garden club tournament. Growing and designing are followed by a desire to exhibit one’s best efforts in competition with others. As in any other area, competition results in higher and higher level of expertise, as exhibitors and visitors alike learn from each other and from the ribbons placed. The flower show is a stage production featuring fresh plant materials as the stars of the cast.

Committee chairmen are:
- Marty Bell, president and chairperson ex-officio and general chairperson; co-chairperson and schedule chairperson, Corine Roberie; and staging chairperson, Toni Hamlin. Classification chairperson is Winnifred Veillon, while design chairperson is Glenda Mitchell.

General rules include:
- The Design Division is restricted to members of the Magnolia Garden Club, or by invitation; however the Horticulture Division is open to all amateur gardeners, both club and non-club members.
- Container grown plants will be received Friday, October 10, between the hours of 4-5 p.m. Entries in all other classes will be received on Saturday, October 11, between the hours of 8-9:30 a.m. at the front entrance of the Teller’s Lobby of the American Security Bank Meeting Room. Late entries will be displayed, but not judged. Judging begins at 10 a.m. Required personnel will begin making last minute checks at 9:30 a.m.
- An exhibitor may make only one entry in each class or subdivision of a class. Emphasis within the show must be placed on fresh plant material (see Handbook, page 1).
- Exhibitors are requested to read the rules of the schedule very carefully. The classification committee will reserve the right to disqualify entries which do not meet the printed regulations of the schedule.
- The exhibitor must have been cleared through the Classification and Entries Committees, and then must be assisted by the Placement Committee when placing entry.
- Judging will begin at 10 a.m. on October 11. No one, except the judges, clerks, the Classification Chairpersons, or the Flower Show Chairpersons, will be allowed in the hall at the time of judging.
- Judging will be in accordance with the National Council of State Garden Clubs Standard System of Judging and Awarding.

The 1997 Handbook is the authority for any points not covered in the schedule. Changes printed in the National Gardener will also apply. Decisions of judges are final. Awards may be withheld if exhibits do not meet requirements.

All entries must be kept fresh and remain in place until the close of the show, and must be removed between the hours of 2-3 p.m. on Sunday, October 12.

The club will not be responsible for property of exhibitors, although reasonable precautions will be taken. It is advisable to label your containers, bases, container plants, etc.

Formal opening of the Flower Show is scheduled for 2 p.m. on Saturday, October 11.

Exhibitors are urged to read Exhibitor Procedures for Entering the Flower Show, pages 75-78 of The Handbook for Flower Shows to avoid disappointment at show-time.

Awards offered in Division I, Horticulture are: The Award of Horticultural Excellence, the Award of five Awards of Merit, Collector’s Showcase, and Arboreal Award.

Awards offered in Division II are: Youth Award, Award of Appreciation and the Educational Award.

Division I Horticulture Rules are:
- All horticulture classes are open to amateur gardeners, both club and non-club members.
- The correct genus and species name (botanical) and exhibitor’s name, clearly printed on advance entry card obtained from Entry Chairperson, must accompany each entry.
- All entries must have been grown by exhibit or have been in her possession for at least three months prior to the show; six months in the case of orchids.

Containers for cut specimens will be furnished by Flower Show Committee. However, exhibitor will furnish container for oversized stems and collections. Container shall be clear (colorless or light green or brown). Plant material wedging (stems) is permitted.

All container-grown plants must be carefully and properly groomed and exhibited in clean container. Maximum size of pot shall be 12 inches inside rim to rim.

Horticulture from the Native Plant and Conservation Plant lists must be grown by exhibitor or acquired in any lawful manner and labeled with botanical and common names. The Conservation Rules of National Council of State Garden Clubs, Inc., and the Louisiana Garden Club Federation, Inc. will be strictly adhered to. All species of the genus Sarracenia (Pitcher Plant) may not be used except to be displayed on their own roots, clearly labeled with both botanical and common name and used as an educational exhibit.

Exhibitor may enter only one exhibit of each color in each class or subdivision of a class.

Classification Committee reserves the right to subdivide a class when necessary.

Horticulture notes: Hybrid tea roses, dahlias, and chrysanthemums should be disbudded for exhibition purposes; single rose and floribunda roses are not disbudded. Grandflora roses may be single prom sprays. Singles will be exhibited as tea roses. Container grown plants entered in flowering section should be in bloom.