**Triticum aestivum** L. **Wheat**

(Triticum amylumostum, Triticum cereale, Triticum sativum, Triticum vulgare var. aestivum, Zeia vulgaris var. aestiva)

- Common Bread Wheat, Common Wheat, or Trigo is the second or third most cultivated cereal grain along with *Oryza sativa* (Rice) behind *Zea mays* (Corn); this strongly erect, annual, mostly hairless (except at the nodes) member of the *Poaceae* (*Graminae*) consists of one to five culms with five or six dark green leaves per culm that can reach as much as ¾" in width and 15" in length; culms mature at variable heights from 3’ to 5’; mature culms terminate in a spike-like inflorescense (ear) up to 6” long bearing 10 to 25 fertile spikelets which yield edible wheat grains (caryopsis); the subtending bracts (lemmas) can terminate toothed or awn (referred to as beards); the beards may be considered ornamental drying in a range of tan, brown, to nearly black colors and these awn inflorescences are sometimes harvested for use in fresh or dried arrangements.

- Origins of this cultigen (a species derived from crosses and selection by humans over so long a time that the origins of the parental species are lost and plant do not exist as a wild species) are unclear, but are thought to have occurred about 9,000 years ago as a result of a hybridization between Wild Goatgrass (*Aegilops tauschii* E.S.-C. Cosson) and Duram Wheat (*Triticum durum* R.L. Desfontaines); the genus name derives from the the ancient Latin word for threshing and the specific epithet is the Latin word for summer; wheat seeds have been reported to retain viability for hundreds of years.

- An obvious essential element of historic, heritage, and educational gardens, *T. aestivum* also can be grown to produce small quantities of edible wheat in the home garden; Wheat can also be distilled into alcoholic beverages, such as wheat beer or vodka; in times past wheat straw (dried stems) were used for thatching, weaving, and mixed with mud or plaster as building materials; straw is also an important mulch and bedding material for livestock care; Wheat is also sometimes planted in cut flower gardens or can be grown as a temporary groundcover, particularly in cool seasons; cultivars are often classified as summer or winter wheat; winter wheats are sown in the fall, maturing for a spring harvest or summer wheat cultivars are planted in the spring for summer harvest; after all where would we be on a sunny summer day without a straw hat to shield us?

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