



sesame-heap-13912678210Fe.jpg (1920×1271) (publicdomainpictures.net)

Source: [Sesame | Infonet Biovision](#)

Watch Out For:

- Watch out for pests (spider mites, whiteflies, gal fly, and cutworms) and disease (bacterial blight, bacterial leaf spot, powdery mildew, stem rot)

Sesame (*Sesamum indicum*) originates in East Africa and is the oldest commercial oil seed. The oil is a clear edible oil with a pleasant taste and a very good long shelf life if properly refined. Sesame has an oil content of 48-55% which is the highest of any oil crop while the protein content ranges from 44 to 48%. Sesame needs a constant high temperature, the optimum range of growth, blossoms, and fruit ripeness is 26 to 30°C.

Sesame only grows well in a warm climate and in East Africa, it is only grown from sea level up to 1500 m. Most varieties of sesame are photoperiod sensitive. Good harvests can be expected when rainfall of 300-600 mm is equally distributed throughout the vegetation period. Optimum rainfall times: 35% before the first cusps are formed, 45% during the main blossoming period, 20% during the ripening period. Drought during harvesting is preferred. During each of its development stages, the plant is highly susceptible to water logging, and can therefore only thrive during moderate rainfall, or when irrigation is carefully controlled in drier regions. Due to its tap roots, the plant is highly resistant to drought and can provide good harvests, when soil moisture is adequate.

A wide range of soils are suitable for sesame cultivation. Optimal are well-drained, loose, fertile, and sandy alluvial soils that have a pH value between 5.4 and 6.75. When irrigated, or during summer rain spells, sesame grows better in sandy than in heavy soils because it is very sensitive to high soil moisture content. It is not recommended to plant sesame on sloping ground, because its need for weed-free seed beds and its slow rate of early development can lead to erosion.

Sesame tolerates temperatures of 24-33°C and the crop matures in 120-140 days. Sesame is an excellent rotation crop of cotton, maize, groundnut, wheat, and sorghum. It reduces nematode populations that attack cotton and groundnut. It is also an excellent soil builder - as it improves the soil texture and moisture retention and lessens soil erosion. The composted sesame leaves left on the soil binds the ground; retain soil moisture better for planting the next crop; and increase the yield of the following crop. Sesame is resistant to drought, tolerant to insect pests and diseases, a low-cost crop, and therefore one of the best alternative specialty crops.