

# *Zea mays*



**Common Name:** Maize, Corn

**Scientific Name:** *Zea mays*

**Family:** Poaceae

Maize is one of the most widely distributed of the world's food plants. Maize is a fast-growing, erect, usually single-stemmed, succulent annual grass (about 1-5 m tall), forming very few tillers.

The leafy stalk of the plant produces pollen inflorescences (or "silk") and separate ovuliferous inflorescences called ears that when fertilized yield kernels or seeds, which are fruits. The apex of the stem ends in the tassel, an inflorescence of male flowers. Maize is a facultative short-day plant and flowers in a certain number of growing degree days  $> 10^{\circ}\text{C}$  in the environment to which it is adapted.

**Economic Importance:** The whole maize plant, from the tassel to the root, is valuable. The stalk, leaves, silk, cob and kernels all have commercial value, that of the kernel is the largest. Maize is mainly used as a staple human food, a feed for livestock and as a raw material for many industrial products.

Maize is grown on more areas of the planet than any other crop and is grown on every continent except Antarctica. The grain of maize is used for food, feed, and industrial products including biodegradable foams, plastics, and adhesives. Additionally, maize stover, the leaves and stalk of the maize plant, is used for forage, biofuel production, and chemical production.