



# HULLESS OATS

## *Avena nuda*

Oats are easy to grow and thrive in cool climates such as our own. Hulless varieties are possible to process by hand. Oats are a healthy and versatile food for humans and are widely used as livestock feed as well.

### PLANTING

Oats are tolerant of many soil conditions but will produce best in moist, moderately fertile soil in full sun. Plant oats in early spring when the soil is workable, around April 1. For easiest maintenance, we plant in rows 6" apart with seed 1" apart. You can also try broadcasting the seed in wide rows. Plant seed 0.5-2" deep. Books recommend 0.3 lb per 100 SF.

### GROWING METHODS

#### MAINTENANCE

On an average site, unless weather conditions are exceptionally dry, oats should not require water in our climate. They dry down during our drought season. One late May weeding is all we have needed. Oats tend to shade out weeds if they get a good head start.

### HARVEST

Oats are ready to harvest when the seed rubs out of the seed head and the seed kernels are hard to the teeth or fingernail. Cut with a sickle and bring inside or cure in windrows for several dry days, turning a few times as with hay.

### THRESHING

Put the material on a tarp on a hard surface and shuffle-dance to rub the seeds out of the seed heads. Rub heads briskly between gloved hands to assist. In our experience, hulless oats are not as easy to thresh as other grains. Winnow in front of a steady fan to clear off the chaff.

### PROCESSING

#### SEED-SAVING/STORAGE

For seed-saving, just put aside some of the seed for next year. To ensure the seed is dry, we usually leave ours in paper bags in a warm, dry location, for a month or two, then store in Rubbermaid bins.

### COOKING TIPS

Oat flour is used in baking wheat-free breads; whole oat groats can be cooked as a substitute for brown rice (1 hour at 2.5 cups water per 1 cup oats); rolled oats can be made at home with a small oat roller.

### YIELDS & LABOR

We yielded just over 7 lbs per 100 SF. The yields listed in books are 3-11 lbs per 100 SF. Threshing takes the most labor and depends on variety.

### BBGP RESEARCH

#### VARIETIES

We have trialled 7 varieties of hulless oats: Kilby, Paul, Pendragon, Pennuda, Ta-ch'aug-Yen Mai, Terra, and an unnamed variety obtained from Johnny's Select Seeds. None were very easy to thresh, in our experience, but more experimenting would be worthwhile.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Oats supply a good source of protein and B vitamins, as well as beta-glucan soluble fiber. The oat straw remaining after harvest is a fantastic garden mulch.