

Winter Crops

Barley

Used for livestock (starch to gain weight), brewing (converted to sugars for fermentation) and malting industries, barley is a useful and plentiful crop.

Growing faster than wheat, barley takes over fields with most farms planting more than 800,000 seeds, reducing the risk of weeds and often mistaken for fields of grass, prior to harvesting.

The grain itself looks almost identical to wheat, and when ready for harvest its hue is yellow/white. Barley can also be identified by the fact the whole spike bends.

Barley is sown between May and July as a winter crop and harvested mid to late spring.

Barley is very versatile and is slightly more frost tolerant than wheat.



Barley can be seen around:

- 📍 Bell
- 📍 Condamine
- 📍 Chinchilla
- 📍 Glenmorgan
- 📍 Jandowae
- 📍 Meandarra
- 📍 Moonie
- 📍 Tara
- 📍 The Gums
- 📍 Warra
- 📍 Westmar

Schedule:

Sown: MAY - JUL

Growing: AUG - SEP

Harvest: OCT - NOV

Best time to see Barley:

SEP - NOV



FUN FACT:

Barley is Australia's second largest grain crop, behind wheat.



Agriculture

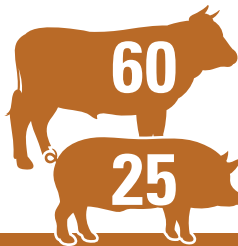
Agriculture sits at the heart of the Western Downs' economy earning its place as Queensland's largest producer of beef, pork, sorghum, wheat, oats, barely and mungbeans.

With 60 registered feedlots, and 25 piggeries it is no surprise that 42% of the national feedlot occupancy is located within a 200km radius of Dalby supplying 53% of Australia's grain fed meat.

Bringing in 250 million dollars annually to our local economy the Dalby Saleyards prime and store sale aims to remain the highest-class livestock selling facility in region continually improving efficiencies, and innovations in technology.

Productivity

Gross Value Production



Wheat
123.57 million

Grain Sorghum
104.67 million

Raw Cotton
122.49 million

WANT TO LEARN MORE

be sure to book your Dalby Saleyard Tour:



westerndownsqueensland.com.au/experience/bookable-tours/

Please note: Do NOT enter private property or fields without direct permission from the owners.

Experience Western Downs

It's the people that make it.

WHAT'S GROWING

A seasonal guide to agriculture throughout the Western Downs.



Winter Crops

Wheat

Wheat is used for both human and animal consumption, wheat delivering a 13 percent protein level is marked for human consumption, anything below is used for livestock feed.

Wheat is sown between May and July as a winter crop and harvested mid to late spring.

Harvest can start as early as October - due the delicious warmth our climate has to offer.

Wheat has a short beard (the bristly material protecting the kernels) and has a golden-brown hue with the wheat spikes generally much straighter than that of barley when ready for harvest.



Wheat can be seen around:

- 📍 Chinchilla
- 📍 Condamine
- 📍 Dalby
- 📍 Glenmorgan
- 📍 Jandowae
- 📍 Jimbour
- 📍 Meandarra
- 📍 Moonie
- 📍 Westmar
- 📍 Tara
- 📍 The Gums

Schedule:

Sown: MAY - JUL

Growing: AUG - SEP

Harvest: OCT - NOV

Best time to see Wheat:

SEP - NOV



FUN FACT:

The 2024 volume of wheat grown across Queensland was forecast at 1.4 thousand kilotons and is found widespread across the Western Downs.

Chickpeas

Often rotated on fields with wheat and barley, chickpeas grow inside pods on shrub like plants.

Dryland fields generally produce anywhere between 1.5-2.5tonne to the hectare with irrigated chickpeas producing 2-4 tonne per hectare.

Requiring an average daily temperature between 15 and 35 degrees, it is commonly planted in early winter and harvested approximately 100 days after sowing in early to mid-October.

Chickpeas are high in protein, double that found in wheat and triple the level found in rice and are one of the original superfoods.

Mostly eaten in Hommus, canned or whole, these peas offer great nutrition for Australia and our local community.

In fact, only one percent of chickpea production is distributed nationally, with the rest exported overseas.



Chickpeas can be seen around:

- 📍 Brigalow
- 📍 Dalby
- 📍 Dulacca
- 📍 Glenmorgan
- 📍 Jandowae
- 📍 Meandarra
- 📍 Moonie
- 📍 Tara
- 📍 The Gums
- 📍 Westmar

Schedule:

Sown: MAY - JUL

Growing: AUG - SEP

Harvest: OCT - NOV

Best time to see Chickpeas:

SEP - NOV



FUN FACT:

Chickpeas are an agricultural wonder. Not only do chickpeas produce a valuable crop but at the same time they also provide a natural organic method of breaking the disease cycle in wheat and barley crops. This means less fungicide and less insecticide, resulting in a cleaner greener environment. Pretty amazing.



Oats

Forage oats are one of the main winter forage crops found in Queensland, due to its ability to produce good quality feed when most pastures are dormant. Growing quickly, it can best be seen in June, July and August.

Many farmers rely on oats to fatten livestock during the period from autumn to early spring. This crop can be baled as hay and saved for the dry season when feed is low.

Planted in March through June, this crop needs soil temperatures between 15 and 25 degrees.

Many varieties of oats are grown in the Western Downs with forage being produced predominantly to support the ever-growing livestock market in the area.

FUN FACT:

In the financial year of 2023, oat exports equated to 283 million dollars for the Australian economy.



Oats can be seen around:

- 📍 Bell
- 📍 Chinchilla
- 📍 Condamine
- 📍 Dalby
- 📍 Glenmorgan
- 📍 Jandowae
- 📍 Kaimkillenbun
- 📍 Meandarra
- 📍 Moonie
- 📍 Tara
- 📍 The Gums
- 📍 Westmar

Schedule:

Sown: MAR - JUN

Growing: JUN - AUG

Harvest: AUG - OCT

Best time to see Oats:

All throughout the winter months.



Summer Crops

Cotton

Did you know that over 100 countries in the world grow cotton. With Australia and Egypt producing the highest quality of cotton in the world?

Cotton can best be identified by its green bushy appearance growing up to a metre tall, producing pink and cream flowers which once pollinated, are replaced by a white cotton boll.

Taking between 180-200 days cotton is sown in spring, grown over the summer months, and harvested into bales over autumn.

Subject to on farm water storage both dryland and irrigated cotton are both produced in the Western Downs, dryland cotton often distinguished by double skip rows.

Cotton processing plants (Cotton Gins) are generally in full swing from April to September, typically taking around 6 months to process subject to yield.

Western Downs Cotton Gins process cotton from as far away as the Northern Territory.



Cotton can be seen around:

- 📍 Chinchilla
- 📍 Condamine
- 📍 Dalby
- 📍 Jandowae
- 📍 Moonie
- 📍 Tara

Schedule:

Sown: SEP - NOV
Growing: DEC - FEB
Picking: MAR - MAY
Ginning: MAY - SEP

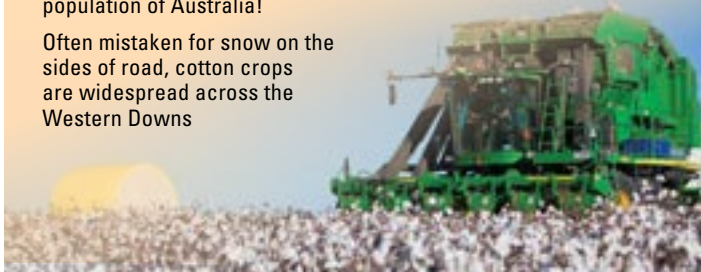
Best time to see Cotton:

MAR - MAY

FUN FACT:

Did you know that one 227kg bale of cotton can produce 324 pairs of jeans or 4,300 pairs of socks? That would mean that 27 bales (6129kg) of cotton could put a pair of socks on the entire population of Australia!

Often mistaken for snow on the sides of road, cotton crops are widespread across the Western Downs



Sorghum

If you've been across Queensland, you've probably spotted sorghum. This corn-like crop grows in most parts of the state.

You'll know you're staring at sorghum because its bright orange head stands tall like a traffic cone.

Needing 4-5 months of temperatures above 15 degrees, Sorghum is sown and grown in the warm temperatures of Queensland's mid spring and summer.

After 115 -140 days this glorious orange plant is harvested, typically from December through to May.

Planting more than one variety, farmers often mitigate risks associated with soil type and weather conditions, resulting in colour variations and higher seed yields.

In 2023, over two million tonnes of sorghum were produced.

Worldwide sorghum is primarily used as a food source for human consumption, however in Australia the primary use of grain sorghum, is feed for livestock with only 5% exported overseas.

Sorghum is a nutritious grain and can be used as a gluten-free alternative in Weetbix and other Australian products.

FUN FACT:

Sorghum yields 750-1,250 seeds per head.



Sorghum can be seen around:

- 📍 Bell
- 📍 Brigalow
- 📍 Chinchilla
- 📍 Condamine
- 📍 Dalby
- 📍 Glenmorgan
- 📍 Jandowae
- 📍 Jimbour
- 📍 Meandarra
- 📍 Moonie
- 📍 Tara
- 📍 The Gums
- 📍 Wandoan
- 📍 Westmar

Schedule:

Sown: SEP - JAN
Growing: OCT - MAR
Harvest: APR - MAY

Best time to see Sorghum:

DEC - MAY



Mung Beans

If crops had a disguise competition, the mung bean would win, this sneaky legume, marketed as a vegetable, is in fact a grain.

These fast-growing crops take around 90-110 days before they are ready to be harvested in a variety of ways, either as fresh beans or as sun-dried seeds.

In Australia, mung beans are the green-seeded variety. The seeds branch out in pods formed at the top of leafy plants and have a deliciously rich, beany taste.

Like chickpeas, this crop has managed to worm their way into the international markets with 95% of Australian mungbean production exported overseas, largely sold to Chinese markets.

Planted through late spring and summer, these plants are in bloom around mid-summer.



Mungbeans can be seen around:

- 📍 Bell
- 📍 Chinchilla
- 📍 Dalby
- 📍 Glenmorgan
- 📍 Jandowae
- 📍 Meandarra
- 📍 Moonie
- 📍 Tara
- 📍 The Gums
- 📍 Warra
- 📍 Westmar

Schedule:

Sown: SEP - JAN
Growing: OCT - MAR
Harvest: APR - MAY

Best time to see Mungbeans:

DEC - FEB



Sunflowers

Sunflowers bring a cheerful brightness to our community and these shining yellow beauties can sometimes be found around the Western Downs.

The bright golden bloom looks spectacular with the lush green of the plant, shimmering against the clear blue skies of south-east Queensland. The golden hours are next level.

Grown for its seed, it can be eaten raw, toasted, or made into sunflower oil. That is, if the cockatoos don't get to them first!

Don't be tricked into thinking they're white flowers, though! Those pesky birds cause plenty of strife for the farmers.

Flourishing in the warmer months, sunflowers are known for their close association with summer.

Sown in spring, this crop takes two to three months to flourish. You'll have no trouble spotting them as they reach to the sky, standing tall and in full bloom through January, February and March.

Vast sunflower displays are more often seen closer to Warwick and the Southern Downs and Granite Belt.



Sunflowers can be seen around:

- 📍 Chinchilla
- 📍 Jandowae
- 📍 Kaimkillenbun
- 📍 Tara

Schedule:

Sown: SEP - NOV
Growing: DEC - FEB
Harvest: JAN - MAR

Best time to see Sunflowers:

JAN - MAR



Watermelons

It isn't a surprise that the Western Downs (Chinchilla in particular) is proud of this juicy crop.

Queensland produces more than 32% of Australia's watermelons, primarily being grown in Bowen, Bundaberg and Chinchilla (2020).

Over 229,000 tonnes of watermelon are produced nationally each year.

Taking 3-4 months to grow, the Western Downs supplies the perfect conditions for these sweet red fruits to grow. The sun can't be too harsh, or it will risk burning the melons.

Sowing occurs in August before they are planted out as seedlings in October through December. After another month, the fruit is finally ready.

Chinchilla is famous for their devotion to melon farming and has earned the title as 'The Melon Capital of Australia.'

It hosts the popular biennial Melon Festival, bringing nearly 10,000 people to the town every second February for three days of melon mania.

FUN FACT:

Did you know that the Chinchilla Melon Festival is one of the oldest running festivals in Australia, having started in 1994.



Watermelons can be seen around:

- 📍 Chinchilla

Schedule:

Sown: AUG
Growing: OCT - DEC
Harvest: JAN - FEB

Best time to see Watermelons:

Time your visit with the biennial melon Festival held in February.



Other Crops

Some other less common crops that appear throughout the region include faba beans, corn, canary and millet. Faba beans and canary are winter crops while corn and millet are grown in the summer months.

Faba beans

Faba beans also known as broad beans, are planted in May and June and harvested in October. They are a great source of nitrogen for the soil and are sold for human and animal consumption.

Corn

Corn is used widely in human consumption from things such as Cornflakes, cornflour, popcorn, etc. Sun-dried grain is used in feedlots for cattle, sheep and pigs. The crop can also be cut green and made into silage for feedlot rations, and it is an excellent rotational crop.

Canary

A less common crop is canary. This crop is planted around July and harvested in November. It produces a lot of straw matter which can be baled and used as mulch and soil protection. Mostly sold as small bird seed.

Millet

Millet is planted throughout summer and has a growth period of around 3 months. There are many different varieties of millet and harvested the seeds are very small.

These seeds are used for human consumption and in bird seed. It also produces good straw matter for mulch, boosting soil coverage and overall soil health.

Leucaena

Leucaena is a high quality, long lived leguminous forage tree.

Leucaena has a potential 30+ year productive life span despite higher establishment costs, it replaces the need for annual forage crops. Steers on grass without supplements typically gain 140-190kg/year because the grass protein content is too low. In contrast, steers grazing leucaena will on average gain 250-300kg/year.



Summer Crops