



Plate from Flora von Deutschland Osterreich und der Schweiz
Courtesy of Robert W. Freckmann Herbarium UW-Stevens Point

Presented by the Town of Middleton

Oats were originally considered an inferior grain crop and typically served as a cheap source of feed for animals. Oat straw is still used as animal bedding, and, occasionally, the whole plant is harvested and treated as forage. More recently, oats have gained favor for human consumption because oat bran (the outer casing of the oat) is thought to lower cholesterol and reduce the risk of heart disease. Humans consume oats mostly in the form of oatmeal, muesli, granola and a variety of baked goods and specialty flours.



Photo credit: Robert W. Freckmann
Herbarium UW-Stevens Point

Oats (*Avena fatua*)

Oats are native to Eurasia. Due to their greater success in cooler, wetter climates than barley, wheat, and other cereals, they usually are grown in northern latitudes in temperate regions of the world such as the northern U.S. and northwest Europe. Oats are presently planted on fewer than 2 million acres in the U.S. They are an annual crop that can be planted either in late fall (for late summer harvest) or early spring (for early autumn harvest).

Narrative credit: James Coors, Professor UW-Madison