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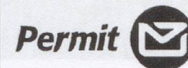
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FLORA IN SWITZERLAND

Saffron



Saffron is a spice derived from the flower of the saffron crocus (*Crocus sativus*), a species of crocus. A *Crocus sativus* flower bears three stigmas; together with their styles, the stigmas are dried and used in cooking as a seasoning and colouring agent. Saffron, long the world's most expensive spice by weight, is native to Southwest Asia.

pastel shade of lilac to a darker mauve. Saffron likes climates where hot, dry summer breezes sweep semi-arid lands. It can nonetheless survive cold winters by tolerating frosts as low as -10°C and short periods of snow cover. Generous spring rains and drier summers are optimal. Rain immediately preceding flowering boosts saffron



Crocus sativus



The domesticated saffron crocus (*C. sativus*) is an autumn-flowering perennial plant unknown in the wild. The plant's purple flowers fail to produce viable seeds; reproduction depends on human assistance: corms, underground bulb-like starch-storing organs, must be dug up, broken apart, and replanted. A corm survives for one season, reproducing via this division into up to ten "cormlets" that yield new plants. Corms are small brown globules up to 4.5cm in diameter and are shrouded in a dense mat of parallel fibres.

In spring, the plant sends up five to eleven narrow and nearly vertical green leaves, each up to 40 cm long. In autumn, purple buds appear. Only in October, after most other flowering plants have released their seeds, do its brilliantly hued flowers develop; they range from a light

yields; rainy or cold weather during flowering spurs disease and low yields. The plants fare poorly in shady conditions; they grow best in strong sunlight. Planting is thus best done in fields that slope towards the sun. Saffron contains more than 150 volatile and aroma-yielding compounds.

The history of saffron cultivation reaches back more than 3,000 years.

Saffron's aroma is often described by connoisseurs as reminiscent of metallic honey with grassy or hay-like notes, while its taste has also been noted as hay-like and sweet. Saffron also contributes a luminous yellow-orange colouring to foods. Confectionaries and liquors also often include saffron. A common saffron substitute is the much cheaper turmeric.

from Wikipedia