

2019 Kenaf Seed Catalog/Research Results

This was our first year growing various varieties of kenaf to determine seed germination rates, seed yield, plant spacing and comparing seed yield with different techniques. The varieties were selected based on their country of origin latitudes in order to match latitudes in the USA for seed testing.

The purpose of this research is to determine if we have varieties that can grow in any US state for viable seed yield. The testing was to determine seed viability on a commercial scale and to see if this makes good business sense.

Along with testing seed germination and seed yield I needed to find out if:

1. Participants would follow instructions and return complete reports in a timely manner per an agreement.

32 varieties were sent to matching latitudes to growers in Hawaii, Texas, Washington State, Tennessee, Minnesota, Illinois, Indiana and Michigan. 7 Growers.

Out of the 32 varieties the 2 growers one in Hawaii the other in Texas did not get their seed planted representing 19 different varieties for the southern and tropical latitudes.

From the 13 varieties that were planted 12 varieties were reported on. Representing central and northern latitudes.

Results

Northern Latitudes – One variety grown (Florida A-65-659) was originally thought to be an Ultra Early variety which turned out to be a medium maturing variety. This was planted in Fairview, Michigan resulted in a 90% germination rate with 19 large mature pods containing 162 mature seeds. Average of 8.5 seeds/pod. Total number of pods was 211 including small and medium immature pods from 9 plants. If we had an additional 2 weeks before frost, our seed yield would have been 10 times more seed. This is the only variety out of 10 varieties tested in northern latitudes that met our criteria to continue testing in 2020. I discovered in 2019 that there are areas of Michigan that Medium Maturing varieties may do well and will be tested in 2020 to see if this would work.

The location where this variety was grown was in a low altitude/valley and a location known for early and late frost in a cold sink environment compared to the higher altitudes 2 miles away. An average of 4 degrees F colder than the nearby areas.

There are longer growing seasons, based on frost dates and ground temperatures in other parts of Michigan we will be looking at planting the 162 seeds to continue our search for viable seed yields. Should we meet the estimated potential seed yield at the end of 2021 (enough for 40 plus acres), this variety will be made available to growers in northern and central latitudes.

In 2020 we will be testing 2 NEW Ultra Early varieties in Michigan. One claims to have a very high seed yield. Both are supposed to have a 70% plus germination rate which we will verify.

Central Latitudes – The only seed yield with a viable germination rate and seed yield “reported” was Whitten. No reports on Dowling. This report was given over the phone, stating an estimate of 3 lbs. of seed from 6 plants out of 10 seeds planted. It was also stated that this variety was planted 3 feet apart in rows and rows were also 3 feet apart. When stalks reached 4 feet tall the top 1 foot was cut off and produced horizontal branches in all directions. This is the only variety we have tested that this growing technique resulted in horizontal branches and high seed yields. Whitten seed can be purchased now at <https://kenafpartnersusa.ecwid.com/>

Reports - 2 out of 7 turned in a complete report according to the written instructions.

Conclusion

In 2020 we will continue our research pilot with Florida A-65-659 in Michigan for northern latitudes and Whitten will continue to be tested in central and southern latitudes in 2020.

We set out to find at least one variety in Northern, Central and Southern parts of the USA that can be grown for seed supply and have found one variety for the Northern and Central sections that show promise. Further testing of these 2 varieties along with any new varieties will continue to be tested for viable results.

Only one variety (Whitten) reported having high seed yield based on 3 foot spacing and cutting tops off to promote branching and seed yield. All other varieties tested showed that we can plant using a 7-inch spacing and not cut the tops off.

We will be testing 3 new medium maturing varieties each reported as very high seed yield. I will be personally overseeing these in selected locations in Michigan.

I will also be personally overseeing the testing of the Early Maturing Varieties in northern Michigan. In 2020 we will be testing 2 varieties for a second year and 5 new varieties for the first year.

2020 Kenaf Seed Catalog

Currently we have 3 medium maturing varieties available for purchase in 100 seeds/packet while supply lasts: Whitten, Everglade 41 and Minhong .

Kenaf Seeds Available Now - <https://kenafpartnersusa.ecwid.com/> Any questions, recommendations etc. related to kenaf please email Bob Lawrason bob@kenafpartnersusa.com