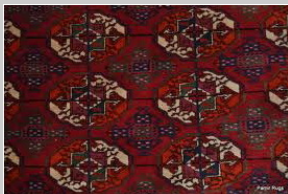


Joint Development Associates International

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Discover Afghan Carpets



The carpets made by the nomads of central Asia, including Afghanistan, are collectively known as Turkoman carpets including Afghan, Baluchi (often prayer rugs), and Bokhara.

Afghan carpets are characterized by easily identifiable geometric patterns depicting the tribal coat of arms (gul). Most are dark red, with some blue, black, ivory or green accents. Quality is determined by the fineness and luster of the wool, intricacy of design, and knot density.

Afghan rugs are often woven on small portable looms and produced for the home or to adorn a tent.

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Dear Friends,

In the homes of our staff and in the kitchens of the farmers with whom we work, you will find imported cooking oil used daily. Afghanistan imports 90% of its cooking oil. Yet some oil seeds, such as safflower have taken time to catch on as a domestic crop. Farmers have lacked good quality seed and suitable varieties. Since 2005, JDA has used its agriculture programs to introduce farmers to various oil seeds, oil presses and production methods.



Safflower (*Carthamus tinctorius*) is a highly branched, herbaceous, thistle-like annual plant. It is commercially cultivated for vegetable oil extracted from the seeds. Plants are 12 to 59 in tall with globular flower heads having yellow, orange, or red flowers. Each branch will usually have from one to five flower heads containing 15 to 20 seeds per head. Safflower is native to arid environments having seasonal rain. It grows a deep taproot which enables it to thrive in such environments.

Safflower is one of humanity's oldest crops. Chemical analysis of ancient Egyptian textiles dated to the Twelfth dynasty identified dyes made from safflower, and garlands made from safflowers were found in the tomb of the pharaoh Tutankhamun.

Production of domesticated safflower was minimal before JDA's work started in 2005. A spiny wild-type was grown, particularly in Kabul province, but much less so in the north. It was used primarily as a barrier for animals and children, and harvested for bird feed.



When JDA's work with safflower started, the plant and its uses was so unfamiliar that even with training, a number of farmers harvested the flowers rather than waiting for the seed. There was additional confusion when saffron was promoted at the same time.

One farmer in Jawzjan described bringing a handful of seeds from Iran in 2002, believing them to be saffron. He did not realize his mistake for several years until JDA arrived with the spineless variety and extension programs. Until this point he had been increasing his seed and feeding the crop to his animals. He had not been able to find a buyer for it, and it had not caught on as a crop.

This farmer still has his Iranian variety which is somewhat thorny and very heterogeneous. But he is now a leading grower of spineless varieties and works in partnership with JDA in evaluating varieties, and enjoying the cash markets fostered by education, promotion and increased production.

