

Hello Students,

My name is DeAnna Diwan Heath and I am a fourth-generation cotton farmer. I grew up on my family's farm between Phoenix and Tucson. My husband and I live in the house that I grew up in! I am very proud that we still farm the land that has been in my family for over 70 years. Even though I grew up on the farm I didn't start farming until I was in college (go ASU!) I farm with my dad who is 77 years old. This year is his 55<sup>th</sup> year of growing cotton, he has so much experience growing cotton he can predict exactly how the weather will affect the crops!



*My husband David and I in one of our cotton fields.*

My family's farming history started in 1925 when my grandfather Herman Diwan and his family came to Casa Grande from Puerto Rico when he was 8 years old. They were brought over by the Arizona Cotton Growers to work on cotton farms. Unfortunately, during the first year here both of his parents died. His brother and sisters were sent to family members living all over the U.S... My grandpa Herman was adopted by his father's former employer, a man named Diwan Singh. Diwan Singh came to the United States all the way from Punjab, India. He was known to be able to farm land that the other farmers felt was not very good and make money off of it. Every day before and after school my Grandpa Herman's job was to feed the 600 horses and mules that they used on the farm. Can you imagine doing two hours of chores before and after school every day?!?



My grandfather Herman Diwan is in the middle with Diwan Singh and his children. He was in a strange land, did not speak the language and had lost his family. (Taken around 1927)

Our cotton's story begins in the spring. We plant it between March and April. The fields are pre watered and about 10 days after that we plant the cotton seed 2 inches down in the soft dirt. We won't water it again for 6-7 weeks, that's when the farm really gets busy. We will water the cotton every week until September. Around 2 months after we plant, the cotton starts to bloom. The flowers start yellow and then turn pink. The actual cotton boll is formed from the flower.



My favorite time of the year is October and November. That's when I love driving around the farm looking at the cotton bolls peeking out between the leaves. This time of year is like an early Christmas for me! It's when the cotton plant starts shedding its leaves and becoming all white. When you drive around the highways the sides of the road start to become covered with cotton, it's the closest we get to snow in central Arizona!

After all the leaves drop off the cotton, it's time to pick. We use Cotton Pickers, which look like a giant green tractor, that drive through the fields stripping all of the cotton off of the plant. The cotton is then dumped into a module maker which smashes the cotton into a giant brick weighing between 17,000 and 23,000 pounds called modules. The modules are taken to the cotton gin to go through a process called ginning. What does ginning do? Ginning is a process that removes the seeds and other debris and puts the clean cotton into 500 pound bales. The bales are pure cotton, similar to cotton balls that you'd buy in a store, just bigger. The cotton seeds are used to feed dairy cows or pressed to make oil for salad dressing. Out of each bale they take a small piece of cotton to test it for things like color, strength, and length. Most of my cotton goes to California where it is loaded onto a ship and sent all over the world.

**Cotton Picker**



**Cotton Module**



**500 lbs. Cotton Bales ready to ship**

Cotton is used for many different things and is in many parts of our daily lives. A few examples of everyday items cotton is in would be clothing, bed sheets, towels, furniture, mattresses, vehicles, dollar bills, and so much more. How many of you are wearing or have something with cotton in it? Well, thank you very much from my family!

### **Fun Facts:**

**How many finished textile products can be made from a typical 500 lbs. bale of cotton lint? Below are a few examples of what might be made from a bale of cotton. (These numbers are approximations)**

- **Men's dress and business shirts 800**
- **Men's & boy's jeans 325**
- **Ladies blouses and shirts 850**
- **Ladies knit & woven dresses 350**
- **Diapers 3,000**
- **Pillowcases 1,200**

Farming has been and will forever be a huge part of my life. It's my family's business and has been for generations. Something that I take a great amount of pride in is that my crops travel around the world making items that people use every day!

I look forward to answering any questions you may have for me! Remember to stay in school, study hard, and thank a farmer!

Sincerely,  
DeAnna Diwan Heath  
Ruby Farms