

Last month, we discussed our upcoming journey into the life of cotton. So today, we will be visiting the first stage, also known as the 'growing' stage.



Baumwollpflüger

## Smart Farming

Farming practices have greatly evolved over the years and the motto for today's cotton farmer is '*less is more*'. Precious agriculture is being incorporated all across the cotton belt in the southern United States. Fertilizer, insecticide, and water usage is down nearly 50% over the last 30 years. This is mainly due to farmers putting the exact rate in the exact place to maximize yields. Less input cost equals maximum returns, allowing for the American farmer to continue the practice for generations to come.

Planting times depend on where the cotton farm is located. For example, the fields in south Texas are planted in early February, while the farms in the west and southeast US are typically planted in April or early May. The varied timing is due to the amount of heat units found in soils all over the country. Since cotton thrives in warm weather, farmers do not want to plant until the ground stays consistently above 60 degrees. Once on the field, a mechanical planter opens a small furrow in each row to the correct depth, drops an exact amount of seed, and covers the hole with earth.



## The Blossom and The Boll

After 60 days, flower buds, called 'squares', will appear on the individual plants. Fast forward another 20 days or so, buds begin to blossom. Their petals change from yellow to reddish pink, then they wither and fall to the ground.

*The plant has lost its petals, does that mean it's dying? Quite the opposite! What's left on the plant is a green pod called the cotton boll.*





Inside the boll, cotton fibers begin to mature and expand—with the help of sunlight and moisture, of course. After the bolls have opened, the farms prepare the plant for harvesting.

*Stay tuned next month, where the Purified Cotton team will take a deep-dive into the harvesting process.*