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## What Is Jojoba?

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Jojoba (pronounced ho-ho-ba) is a hardy shrub which grows wild in the Sonoran desert in northern Mexico and southwest USA. Its seeds contain an oil, which is really a liquid wax, that is very similar in properties to sperm whale oil. This kind of wax is difficult and expensive to synthesize in commercial quantities, so the demand for jojoba or sperm whale oil seems sure to continue. The oil is excellent as a lubricant under high pressures and temperatures. The Christian Science Monitor says that a few drops of jojoba oil added to transmission fluid has been found to reduce internal temperature 20 and in turn double the life of the transmission, but the high price makes oil companies wary so far. It is an excellent agent for controlling foaming in penicillin, requiring only 1/6 the amount of sperm whale oil used for the same purpose. Wyeth Laboratories project their annual needs at 35,000 gallons and the U. S. penicillin industry needs at 7,000,000 pounds. Its main use so far, however, is in the cosmetics industry. I have heard advertisements for products with jojoba. Demand for both cosmetic and lubricant applications is sure to go up as price goes down.

As far as I know, there are no named varieties, though that may soon change. Most plantations are established from seed. One disadvantage of planting seed is that all plants will not be of equal quality. Superior plants can be propagated by tissue culture or cuttings. Plants are either male or female, but the sex cannot be determined until flowering. A ratio of 1 male to 5-7 females seems ideal, with excess males being rogued out. Jojoba has a life expectancy of at least 100 years. It can withstand grazing (and apparently makes good forage). Plants grow to 3 feet under water and grazing stress, but can be 9 feet tall under ideal conditions. I can send you a two page, fact-filled write-up by the Office of Arid Lands Studies called "Jojoba: How To Grow It". We will also try to find answers to specific questions that you cannot track down from your present location.