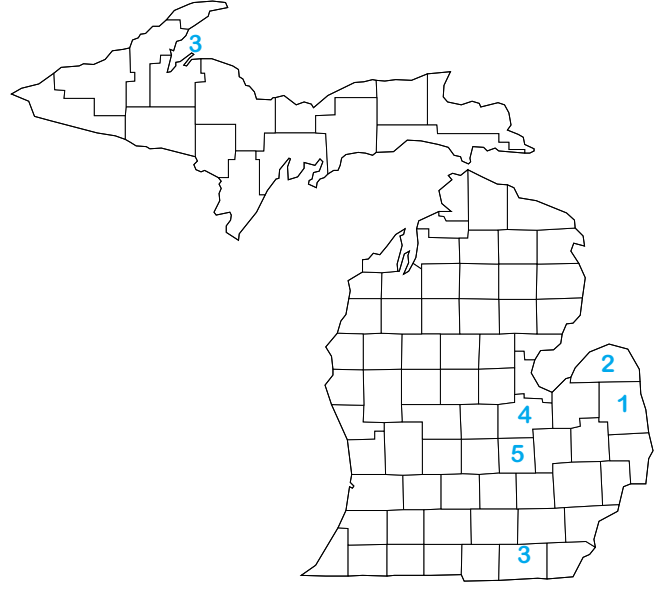
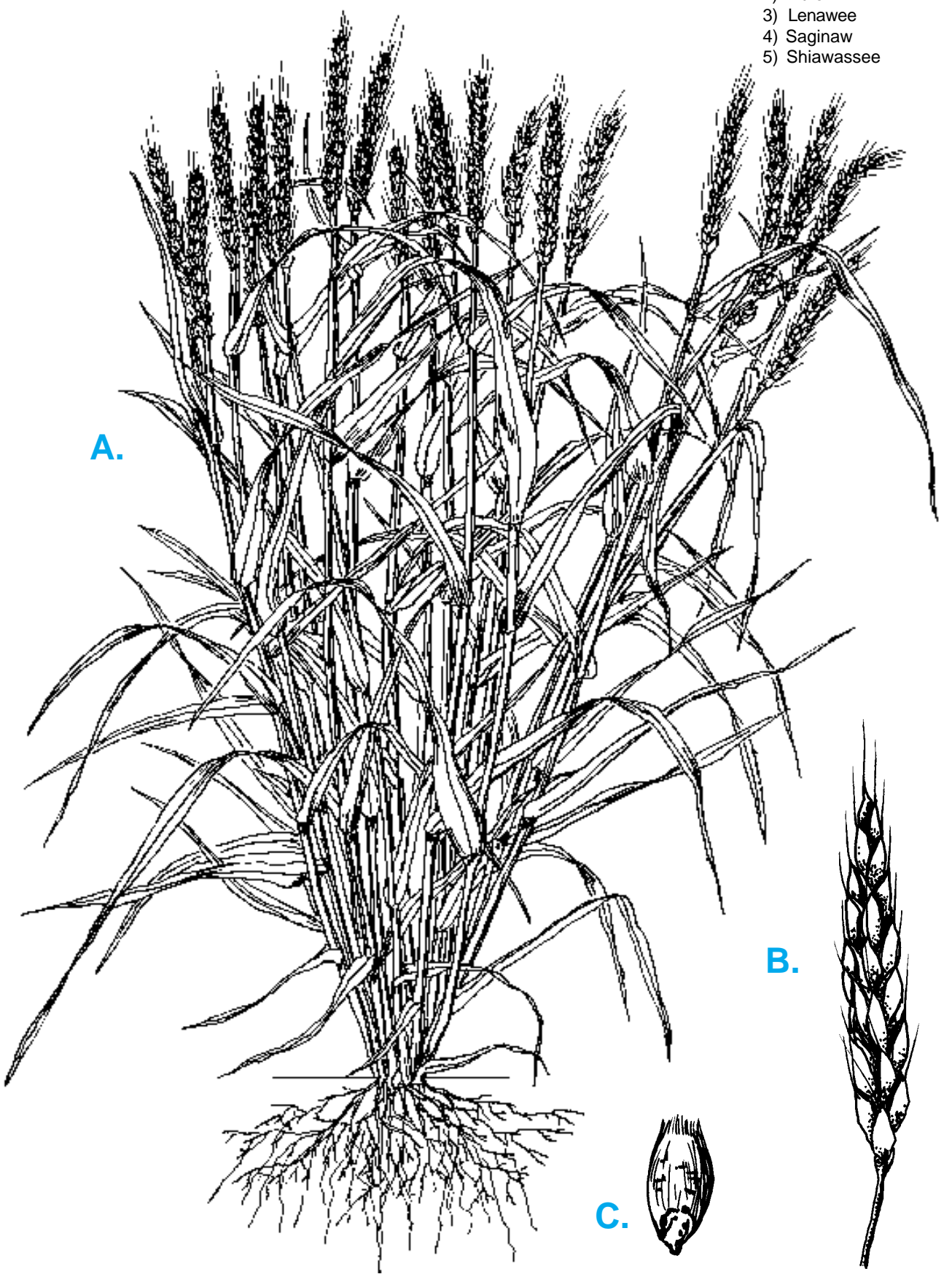


WHEAT

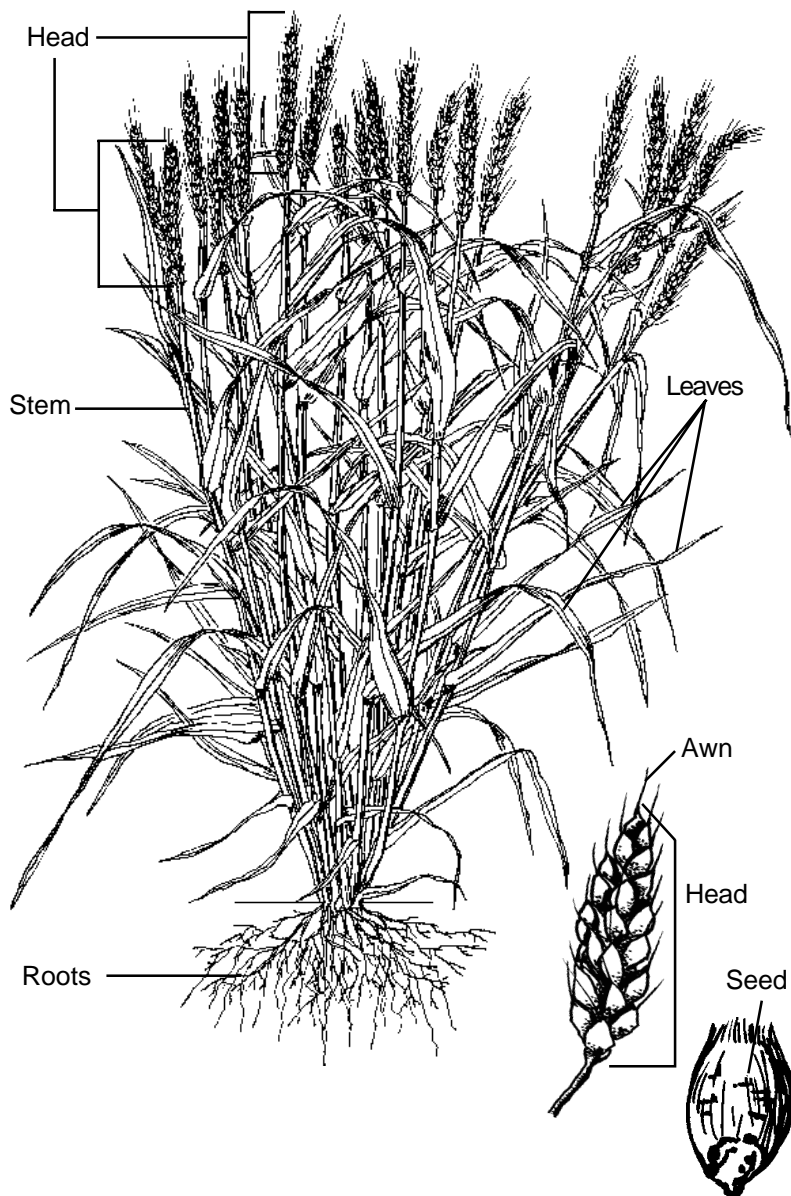


**Top 5 MI Counties
Producing Wheat (2000)**

- 1) Sanilac
- 2) Huron
- 3) Lenawee
- 4) Saginaw
- 5) Shiawassee



WHEAT



Planting

Wheat is a cool season crop requiring a frost-free period of about 100 days. Growth begins at temperatures of 37°F to 39°F with an optimum of 77°F.

Spring wheats are typically planted when soil conditions permit tillage. Winter wheats are planted in the fall, usually after September 15. First, a disk is used to turn and loosen the soil, and to kill any young weed plants. Pulled behind a tractor, a disk has a set of metal "plates" that dig deep into the soil.

Wheat is planted by a machine called a grain drill in rows 5 to 16 inches apart. First, a shovel, or disc, cuts a trench into the soil so the seeds can drop one at a time into the trench. Loose soil is pressed over the newly planted seeds. Now the seeds are ready to grow. Spring wheat is usually seeded at 90 to 120 pounds per acre, and winter wheat at about 30 to 50 pounds per acre.

Growing Cycle

The seed begins to grow when there is enough moisture in the soil. The first sign of growth are tiny roots that stretch down into the soil. Eventually, a small shoot pushes upward through the soil.

Tissue within the wheat seed provides the plant with its first nourishment. As the plant grows, it uses the sun to make food in its leaves. Its roots also get food (minerals and water) from the soil.

In the spring, the wheat plant grows six to eight leaves per stem and sends up three to ten stalks of golden flowers called "heads." Kernels within the wheat head grow healthy and plump for harvesting.

Harvest

Wheat must be dry before it can be harvested. A machine called a combine is used to cut, separate and clean the grain with one pass through the wheat field. The producer stores the grain in bins on the farm or at elevators until needed for food processing. Michigan farmers planted 530,000 acres of winter wheat in 2000. The winter wheat crop produced 36 million bushels, valued at more than \$75 million.

Wheat is ground into flour at a mill. Bran, the outer layer of the wheat kernel, is added to breakfast cereals for nutritious fiber. Wheat products have carbohydrates, protein, minerals and vitamins.

The crop also is used as animal feed. Scientists are studying ways to use wheat for non-food products such as makeup, medicines and biodegradable plastics. Nearly 50 percent of the United States wheat crop is sold to other countries.

Did you know . . .

- Michigan flour mills are checked by Michigan Department of Agriculture food inspectors for sanitation and construction standards.
- Wheat is the largest acreage crop in the world and is the staple food of 35 percent of the world's population.
- Harvesting occurs in every month of the year somewhere in the world. In the United States, harvest begins in late May in south Texas and progresses northward to be completed by late September or even October in the northern tier of states. In Michigan, most of the harvest occurs in August.
- Different market classes of wheat are the bread wheats, Hard Red Spring and Hard Red Winter; the pasta wheat, Durum; the cake, cookie and donut wheat, Soft Red Winter wheat grown in southeast United States; and the white wheats used for crackers and noodles grown in the northwest part of the United States.

ON THE FRONT

A. Wheat Plant

Wheat is an annual grass plant that grows two to four feet tall. The plants have long and narrow green leaves that turn golden as harvest nears.

B. Wheat Head and Kernels

The wheat head contains kernels or seeds, and is located at the top of the plant stem. Kernels are the only part of the wheat plant used for human food. Each wheat head contains 50 to 75 kernels.

C. Wheat Kernels (Seeds)

Wheat kernels are very small with 12,000 to 20,000 seeds per pound. A bushel of wheat weighs about 60 pounds and contains about one million kernels. An acre of land, about the size of a football field, provides enough wheat for 2,500 loaves of white bread.

Wheat

Wheat is used mostly for human food. History shows that the first people to eat wheat probably did so 17,000 years ago by chewing kernels of the wild grain.

There are two major types of wheat planted in the United States -- winter wheat and spring wheat. Winter wheat is planted in the fall and harvested the following summer in the states from Nebraska south. Spring wheat is planted in April or May and is harvested in August or September in the Northern Great Plains.

Michigan wheat producers grow primarily red and white wheat varieties, which is used primarily to make breads and hard rolls. Some Durum is produced and used for pasta.

