

# Oilseed Production

Soybeans, sunflowers, canola, flax, crambe and safflower are the major oilseed crops grown in North Dakota.

**Soybeans** grow in pods on the plants. Each plant may have 60 to 80 pods, and two to four pea-sized beans grow in each pod. The plant's stems, leaves and pods are covered with short, fine hairs. The soybean plant is called a legume because its roots have nodules (small rounded bumps) that give nutrients back to the soil by collecting nitrogen from the air and releasing it back into the soil.

**Sunflowers** come in two types: striped (non-oil) seeds and black (oil) seeds. Each head has about 1,000 sunflower seeds surrounded by big, bright yellow flower petals. Near harvest time the heavy heads droop toward the ground. Sunflowers grow very tall, up to 10 feet high. The roots may grow 6 feet into the ground.

**Canola** grows 2 to 4 feet tall and blooms with bright yellow flowers in early summer. The flowers produce seed pods about 2 inches long. Each pod turns brown or tan as it ripens and contains 20 or more tiny round black or brownish-yellow seeds.

**Flax** also comes in two types: seed flax for the oil in its seed and fiber flax for the fiber in its stem. Today most Midwest producers grow seed flax. Its main stem and branches have pretty purplish-blue flowers when it blooms. The plant may grow up to 3 feet high. The tap root may extend 3 feet into the ground with side branches stretching out 1 foot from it. The tiny seeds are in a boll or capsule containing 6, 8 or 10 brown or yellow seeds.

**Crambe** has branches and large, dark green leaves that are heart-shaped and crinkled. The plant has many tiny white, four-petaled flowers when it blooms. Each round seed is enclosed in a pod. Crambe grows 2 to 4 feet tall.

**Safflower** is a thistle-like plant with a strong central branch stem. Each branch usually has one to five yellow or orange flowers, and each flower produces 15 to 20 seeds. The plants grow 15 to 30 inches tall, and the tap roots can penetrate 5 to 8 feet into the soil.

## Name That Oilseed Plant

From the descriptions above, identify the different North Dakota oilseed plants.

