

Raw Materials

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Broom straw, in fact, is a special variety of corn species sorghum referred to as *Sorghum vulgare*, or *S. bicolor* variety *technicum*. Sorghum can survive in hot and arid climates due to its resistance to drought. It grows a much longer tassel at the top than other varieties of corn. The plant can grow as tall as 2 to 8 feet (0.61-2.4 m) and is cultivated for its stiff stems. Broom straw was first grown in Hadley, Massachusetts in the 1790s by Levi Dickinson but another farmer may have been growing it as early as 1773. Broom straws are laid out to dry when the tasseled branches growing seeds on the top are harvested. The de-seeding tool "broom pounder" will be used to rap the seeds connecting to the tassels off with its dull straight edge. The seeds are edible, high in starch and carbohydrates. They can be made into cereals or for feeding animals. The stalks without seeds are ready for broom making. In addition to broom straws, sotol fiber harvested from the yucca plant may also be used to make cheaper brooms. Metal wire and small nails are needed to tighten the broom to its wood or bamboo handle. Before sewing the broom flat with a machine and twice, it will be watered.