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*Pennisetum*

*Gramineae*

[*Poaceae*]

*Pennisetum* is derived from Latin *penna* (feather) and *seti-* (bristle, hair) components with reference to the feathery bristles on the flowers of some species.

The common name Millet is given to several plants from differing genera in the grass family, which can have originated in different parts of the World too.

There is a species of millet which was cultivated around 4500 BC as the basic grain in, what is now northern China. Records of about 2,800 BC refer to millet as one of the five sacred cultivated Chinese plants – the others being barley (*Hordeum*), rice (*Oryza*), soya (*Glycine max*) and wheat (*Triticum*). East of the Mediterranean the Sumerians grew various species of millet. And it was also cultivated around the Mediterranean as millet was used by the Roman poor for coarse home-made bread and a kind of polenta-like porridge.