

Re: SUNFLOWERS DOMESTICATED IN MEXICO 2000 YEARS AGO

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On Tue, 29 Apr 2008 12:16:02 +0200, Peter Alaca
<p.alaca@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

michaelruggeri@xxxxxxx wrote: on, 29/04/2008 06:25:

Listeros,

A new study claims that sunflowers were grown as a domesticated crop in Mexico more than 2000 years ago. This contradicts the idea that sunflower farming began in the US East and moved south to Mexico. Plant remains were found in a cave in Morelos with cultivated large seeds from 300 BCE.

Sunflower cultivation did take place in the eastern US 4000–5000 years ago. The new study proves sunflower domestication was also domesticated in Mexico independently. There is a counter critique to this claim by others who do not accept the new evidence but the large size seeds in the Mexican plant make a north to south transfer unlikely.

I don't understand. Why is a north to south transfer unlikely if cultivation in the north began 2–3000 years earlier?

I am not familiar with the details in the case here, but (I think I read this in Diamond's *Steel, Guns'n'Germs*) it is fairly easy to spread a plant parallel to a latitude because it remains more or less in its own climate zone to which it is adapted, whereas north-to-south spreading crosses climate zones which takes much longer. Take wheat: from northern Iraq to Greece wasn't much of a jump, but from Greece to rainy Holland is.

A source on the first find of sunflower in the Ohio Valley is in *Nature* 430, 201, 2004.

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