

Now, the VOA Special English program Words and Their Stories.

Green is an important color in nature. It is the color of grass and the leaves on trees. It is also the color of most growing plants.

Sometimes, the word "green" means "young, fresh and growing." Sometimes, it describes something that is not yet ripe or finished.

For example, a "greenhorn" is someone who has no experience, who is new to a situation. In the 15th century, a "greenhorn" was a young cow or ox whose horns had not yet developed. A century or so later, a "greenhorn" was a soldier who had not yet had any experience in battle. By the 18th century, a "greenhorn" had the meaning it has today -- a person who is new in a job.

About 100 years ago, "greenhorn" was a popular expression in the American West. Old-timers used it to describe a man who had just arrived from one of the big cities back east. The "greenhorn" lacked the skills he would need to live in the hard, rough country.

Someone who has the ability to grow plants well is said to have "a green thumb." The expression comes from the early 1900s.

A person with a green thumb seems to have a magic touch that makes plants grow quickly and well. You might say that the woman next door “has a green thumb” if her garden continues to grow long after your plants have died.

“The Green Revolution” is the name given some years ago to the development of new kinds of rice and other grains. The new plants produced much larger crops. “The Green Revolution” was the result of hard work by agricultural scientists who had “green thumbs.”

Green is also the color used to describe the powerful emotion, jealousy. The “green-eyed monster” is not a frightening creature from outer space; it is an expression used about 400 years ago by British writer William Shakespeare in his play “Othello.”

It describes the unpleasant feeling a person has when someone has something he wants. A young man may suffer from the “green-eyed monster” if his girlfriend begins going out with someone else. Or, that “green-eyed monster” may affect your friend if you get a pay raise and she does not.

In most places in the world, a “green light” is a signal to move ahead. A “green light” on a traffic signal means your car can continue on. In everyday speech, a “green light” means “approval to continue with a project.” We want you to know we have “a green light” to continue this series next week.

This VOA Special English program Words and Their Stories was written by Marilyn Christiano. I’m Warren Scheer.



## **Contact information for VOA Learning English:**

Postal address:

**VOA Learning English  
Room 3400  
330 Independence Ave SW  
Washington, DC 20237  
United States of America**

Email us at: [LearningEnglish@voanews.com](mailto:LearningEnglish@voanews.com)

Or go to our website -- [learningenglish.voanews.com](http://learningenglish.voanews.com) -- and click  
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