

Texas Agricultural Extension Service

Easy Gardening Sweet Corn

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Sweet corn is a crop which should be planted in larger gardens. Like most vegetables, corn will grow best in areas with plenty of sunlight.

Soil Preparation

Work the top 8 to 10 inches of soil before planting. Remove weeds, rocks and trash. Work the soil only when it is dry enough not to stick to garden tools.

Fertilizing

Use 2 to 3 pounds of fertilizer such as 10-20-10 for each 100 square feet of garden area. Spread the fertilizer evenly over the soil. Work it into the soil 3 to 4 inches deep. Rake the soil to smooth the surface.

Varieties

Yellow

Summer Sweet 7800
Sweet G-90
Kandy Korn

White

Silver Queen

If you have room, plant again when the first corn plants have 3 to 5 leaves. This usually takes 2 to 3 weeks.

You will need 1 to 2 ounces of seed for every 100 feet of row. Do not use seed saved from last year's sweet corn. The seeds will not grow a good crop.

Sweet corn grows best when planted in several short rows instead of one or two long rows. This makes it easier for the corn plants to pollinate. Good pollination is necessary for ears of corn to have plump, juicy kernels.

Plant the corn seeds about 1 inch deep and 3 to 4 inches apart in the row. Space the rows 2 1/2 to 3 feet apart. After the plants are up, thin them to 1 foot apart. If you plant them closer, your corn will have small, poorly-filled ears (Figures 1 and 2).

Planting

Sweet corn is a warm season crop and must be planted after the soil warms and there is no more danger of frost.

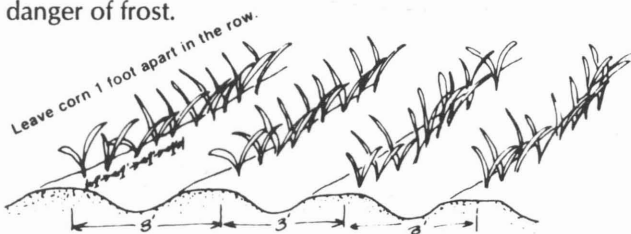


Fig. 1. Plant corn in several short rows, not in one or two long rows.

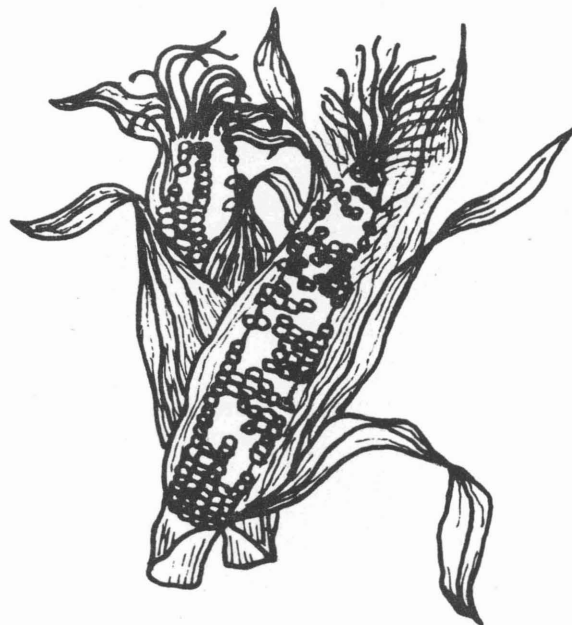


Fig. 2. Poorly-filled corn is caused by poor pollination.

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Watering

Water corn as needed to keep it from wilting. Do not let corn suffer from lack of water when the kernels are forming.

Care During the Season

Hoe or till the soil just under the surface. Hoe the weeds off just below the soil's surface. Deep hoeing will cut the corn roots which are close to the top of the soil.

When the plants are about 2 feet tall, apply 1 cup of fertilizer for each 10 feet of garden row. Scatter the fertilizer evenly between the rows. Mix it lightly with the soil. Water after fertilizing (Figure 3).

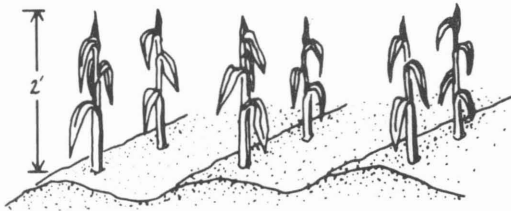


Fig. 3. When corn is about 2 feet tall, scatter 1 cup of fertilizer around each 10 feet of row and water it in.

Insects

<u>Name and description</u>	<u>Control</u>
Corn earworm - green, brown or pink; light stripes along sides and on back; up to 1 ³ / ₄ inches long; feeds on plant top (tassel) and ear	Check with your county Extension agent

Before using a pesticide, read the label. Always follow cautions, warnings and directions.

Diseases

If a few of your corn plants are stunted, they must have a virus disease and should be removed to keep the virus from spreading.

Harvesting

The best time to pick corn is in the early morning or evening when it is cool. Juice from the kernels should be milky white, and kernels should be soft.

The silk on the ears should have turned dark brown. The ears should be firm. Kernels on the tips of the unhusked ears should be plump and milky.

Sweet corn is not ready when the juice of the kernel is watery. It is overripe when the kernels get large, chewy and pasty like dough.

To harvest the ears, hold the stalk below the ear. Twist the tip of the ear toward the ground until it breaks off. Cook the corn right away, or store it in the refrigerator until mealtime. Corn loses flavor and nutrients quickly when left at high temperature.

Watch the corn closely because the quality changes fast. Corn is ready for harvest about 2 to 3 weeks after the silk appears on the ear.

Serving

Corn has small amounts of many vitamins and minerals and contains fiber.

Corn-on-the-cob is best when picked fresh and cooked immediately. Cook fresh sweet corn on the cob or cut it off the cob.

Remove husks, silk and bad spots just before cooking.

Corn which is past its best quality is still good as cream-style corn.

Storing

Store corn in the husk. Place it uncovered in the refrigerator for 1 to 2 days. Corn which is stored more than 2 days loses its sweetness.

Cleanup

Old corn plants are good compost for adding to the garden soil. They will break down much faster if shredded before composting.

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