



# Easy Gardening

**SWEET CORN • SWEET CORN • SWEET CORN • SWEET**

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**S**weet corn is a member of the grass family. In smaller gardens, it should be planted in square blocks instead of long rows to improve cross-pollination between corn stalks. Like most vegetables, corn will grow best in areas with plenty of sunlight.

Corn is one of the plants grown in the traditional Native American vegetable technique call the Three Sisters. The other two plants in the Three Sisters are beans and squash, and each had its role in this companion planting tradition. Corn served as a support for the vining beans. Squash served as a ground cover, preventing weeds from growing. Beans provided natural fertilizer for all.

## Site selection

Corn can tolerate many soil types but prefers well-drained soils with a pH between 5.5 and 7.0. In sandy soils or soils with a low pH, corn may suffer from magnesium deficiency.

## Varieties

Normal sugary	Sugary enhanced (se)	Shrunken (sh2)
Bonanza	Ambrosia	Crisp-N-Sweet
Merit	Argent	Florida Staysweet
Silver Queen	Bodacious	Frontier
Sweet G-90	Golden Queen	Honey n Pearl
	Kandy Korn	How Sweet It Is
	Legend	Mirai
	Tendertreat	Summer Sweet
Popcorn		
Robust White		
Strawberry		

## Soil preparation

Remove weeds, rocks and trash, and work the top 8 to 10 inches of soil before planting. 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 10-10-10, for every 100 square feet of garden area. Spread the fertilizer evenly over the soil and work it into the soil 3 to 4 inches deep. Rake the soil to smooth the surface.

## Planting

Sweet corn is a warm-season crop and must be planted after the soil warms and there is no more danger of frost. If you have room, plant again when the first corn plants have three to five 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 as these seeds will not grow a good crop.

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



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



**Figure 2.** Poorly filled corn is caused by poor pollination.

Plant the corn seeds about 1 inch deep and 3 to 4 inches apart in the row. Space the rows  $2\frac{1}{2}$  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 (Figs. 1 and 2.)

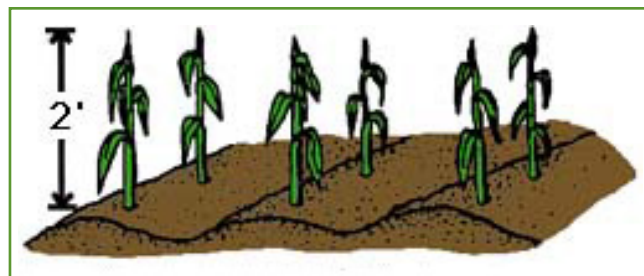
## Watering

Water sweet 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 every 10 feet of garden row. Scatter the fertilizer evenly between the rows and mix it lightly with the soil. Water after fertilizing (Fig. 3.)








**Figure 3.** When corn is about 2 feet tall, scatter 1 cup of fertilizer for every 10 feet of row and water it in.

## Diseases

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

## Harvesting

Corn is ready for harvest about 3 weeks after the tassel grows on top of the corn plant. Corn is ripe when juice from the kernels is milky white, the silk on the ears has turned dark brown, the ears are firm, and kernels on the tips of the unhusked ears are plump and milky. Sweet corn is not ready when the juice of the kernel is watery. It is overripe when the

Name and description	Control
 <p data-bbox="152 575 347 613">Corn earworm</p>	<p data-bbox="727 235 958 327">Sevin® Bt garlic juice extracts</p>
 <p data-bbox="152 911 347 978">European corn borer</p>	<p data-bbox="727 642 958 701">Bt garlic juice extracts</p>
 <p data-bbox="152 1318 347 1356">Fall armyworm</p>	<p data-bbox="727 1012 958 1163">azadirachtin Bt garlic juice extracts kaolin spinosad</p>
 <p data-bbox="152 1596 347 1633">Flea beetle</p>	<p data-bbox="727 1386 958 1570">crop rotation resistant varieties permethrin Sevin® garlic juice extracts azadirachtin</p>
 <p data-bbox="152 1915 347 1953">Grasshopper</p>	<p data-bbox="727 1663 958 1785">garlic juice extracts azadirachtin pyrethrin Sevin®</p>

kernels get large, chewy and pasty like dough.

The best time to pick corn is in the early morning or evening when it is cool. To harvest the ears, hold the stalk below the ear and 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 meal-time. Corn loses flavor and nutrients quickly when left at high temperature. Watch the corn closely because the quality changes fast.

## Serving

Corn has small amounts of many vitamins and minerals and is best when cooked immediately after picking. It can be cooked either on or 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 or 2 days. Corn stored for more than 2 days loses its sweetness.

## Cleanup

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

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