



Rockin E Gardening Handouts

Tips and Suggestions for 'Year-Round' Gardening

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Corn Care and Descriptions

Sweet corn is one of the most popular summer vegetable crops to eat. However, choosing a variety of corn to grow is sometimes difficult. If you've shopped for corn seed, it is easy to get confused by the initials on the packet or by the catalog description. To help you understand them, here is the code. The initials "su" mean "normal" sweet corn. The initials "se," "se+," or "EH" mean "sugar-enhanced" corn. The initials "sh2" mean "super-sweet" or "extra-sweet." The newest is the "TS", "SY" or "Triple Sweet" type.

If you are still growing the old, standard sweet-corn varieties, you are missing a real treat. Try one of the newer varieties that have recently become popular, you will never go back to your old variety.

Which variety is the best? That is a very hard question because there is not 'One Best Variety of Corn', there are a lot of best varieties. Listed below are many of the varieties that are available.



Sweet Corn - Planting & Harvesting

Corn is a hot weather vegetable. Do not plant corn until the soil temperature is at least 60° to 65° F degrees. Corn takes about 20 days to emerge from 50° soil, but only takes about 5 days to emerge from 70° soil. At 50° F the seed will absorb water, so it is prone to rotting if it cannot germinate quickly enough.



Soil Temperature 70° F.

Corn seeds are most sensitive to cold, wet conditions during the first 24 hours after planting. If you do plant corn seeds early, be sure to dust them with **captan** to help prevent them from rotting. Remember, it is sometimes better to plant a week too late, than a day too early.

Plant corn seeds one inch deep. Plant 2 or 3 seeds twelve inches apart. After germination thin plants to one or two plants every twelve inches. Corn planted too closely will produce smaller ears than corn spaced properly. One half pound of corn seed will plant a 500' row.

Corn needs to grow quickly to be tasty. Sweet corn grows about one inch per day, so it needs adequate soil moisture and good nutrition to make the best crop. In addition to the fertilizer that you apply when you prepare the soil, you must add additional nitrogen fertilizer for best yields.

Side dress sweet corn with 3/4 pound of 21-0-0 per 100 square feet when plants have 8-10 leaves and add an additional 1/4 pound when the first silks appear. Place the fertilizer 6 inches to the side of the plant and irrigate it into the soil.

For best pollination, plant corn in short, small blocks rather than in long narrow rows. Do not plant different varieties near one another. Corn cross pollinates very easily and the flavor may change if pollinated by an undesired variety.

Plant a crop of corn every two weeks from mid-May until mid-July for an extended harvest season. Early and late frosts are always a risk in extending your corn harvesting season.

Isolation: Separate sweet corn from popcorn, Indian Corn,

and from supersweet corn varieties. Isolate (Se) types from (Su) and from triplesweet varieties. **Isolation means that varieties should be planted 500 feet apart, or planted at least 2 weeks apart.**



After harvest, refrigerate corn as much as possible. Room temperatures allow sugar to turn to starch 6 to 10 times faster than refrigerated corn.

Varieties

Bodacious (Se) 75 days - Yellow corn. Plants grow 7' tall. Ears are 8" long with 16 to 18 rows of kernels. Do not plant this variety early, seeds need a warm soil to germinate. Extra sweet kernels, flavor lasts well 1 or 2 weeks after harvest.

Early Sunglow (Su) 63 days - Short, 4' plants. Ears are 7" long with 12 rows of kernels. Noted for its cool weather performance - it will germinate at cooler temperatures. One of the earliest ripening varieties. Keep 400' away from (Se) types or plant 3 to 4 weeks apart to prevent cross pollination. Not as sweet as newer varieties but perfect for an early or late crop.

Golden Bantum (Open Pollinated) 78 days - Old time favorite that breeds true to strain if isolated from hybrid types of corn. You can harvest and save the seed for future use. Ears are 6" to 7" long with 8 rows of tender kernels. Plants grow 5'-6' tall. Not as sweet as hybrid varieties.

Honey Select (Triplesweet) 79 days - Ears are 8" long. Does not require isolation from other varieties. Long harvest time without loss of eating quality. Has two types of kernels on the same ear. It is one of the sweetest varieties available. Stalks grow 6' to 6.5' tall. Doesn't require isolation.

Incredible (Se) 85 days - Super Sweet! One of the best 'Sugar Enhanced' varieties. Produces ears 8" to 9" long with 14 to 16 rows of kernels. Stores well, even after picking. Grows 7' tall and produces well. Very sweet and delicious.



Jubilee Hybrid (Su) 81 days - Very popular variety of corn. Large, sweet ears up to 8.5" to 9" long. Ears have 18 to 20 rows of kernels. Stalks grow 6' to 7' tall. Not as sweet as newer varieties, but one of the most popular older hybrid varieties. Good for eating fresh, canned, or frozen.



Kandy Korn (Se) 84 days - Grows 8' tall. Has purple silk and a distinctive reddish stripe on the husks and stalks. Sugar Enhanced variety, extra sweet flavor. Produces ears 8" long with 14 to 16 rows of kernels. This variety can be harvested over a long time without losing flavor. Will hold flavor up to 10 days after picking. Good fresh and frozen.

Miracle (Se) 82 days - Super Sweet Variety! Plants grow 6 1/2' tall, great for small garden areas. Produces ears 8.5" long with 16 to 20 rows of extra sweet kernels. Great corn to FREEZE. Tender and juicy ears that hold well up to two weeks after harvest. Great Flavor! One of the best varieties for home gardens.

Peaches & Cream (Se) 83 days - Bicolor sweet corn. Cobs are 8.5" long with 18 to 20 rows of extremely sweet yellow and white kernels. Stalks grow 7' tall. Keeps its sweetness long after harvest. Used for fresh, roadside markets and very popular in home gardens. Excellent for home freezing. Most popular bicolor variety.



Serendipity (Triplesweet) 82 days - Bi-color corn. Produces high quality 8" ears with 16 to 18 rows of sugar enhanced kernels. It has two types of kernels on the same ear (75% (Se) and 25% (Sh2)). Plant grows 6' to 6.5' tall. This variety is known for extra sweetness, a great holding ability after harvest, an unsurpassed eating enjoyment and a long shelf life. It is one of the sweetest varieties of corn.

Silver King (Se) 82 days - White Corn. Tender kernels consistently fill each ear all the way to the tip. Ears average 8" long with 16-18 rows of kernels. Even a sweeter corn than Silver Queen. Stalks grow 6' to 7' tall.

Do not confuse with the Silver King 'Heirloom' variety.

Silver Queen (Su) 88 days - White corn. One of the most popular corn varieties because of sweetness. Ears are 8" long with 14 to 16 rows of kernels. Stalks grow 8' tall.



Sugar Buns (Se) 72 days - Plants grow 6' tall. Ears are 7" long with 14 rows of extra-sweet kernels. Flavor holds well up to 2 weeks after harvest. An early, truly gourmet hybrid corn developed for the home garden and for the fresh, roadside stands. This variety combines earliness with excellent sweet flavor and good keeping qualities.

Corn Types

Non-Hybrid and Heirloom Types

These varieties are open pollinated, which means you do not have to worry about isolation or cross pollination. You can save the seed to replant because they will reproduce true to type. However, you may need to isolate these varieties from your hybrid varieties, to maintain the hybrid



corn's attributes. The heirloom status means the variety has been available for at least 50 years.

Pros - Stable seed vigor and germination - Fast growing - You can harvest and store your own seed. Tip: To maintain a good seed source, only save seed from the top 20% of your crop.

Cons - These varieties are not very sweet. You should harvest them on time, and eat or process them within 1 or 2 days after harvest.



Sugary (Su) Types

Has 9% - 16% sugar content in each kernel. These are the original types of corn that have been around for decades. They are not as sweet as other hybrid types, but they are sometimes more vigorous in home gardens. You can plant when the soil temperature is 58° F.

Pros - Best seed vigor and germination - Fast growing - Less ear damage during harvest

Cons - Lowest sugar content of hybrid varieties at harvest - Does not store long - Fastest sugar loss after harvest. Holds 3 days, a little longer if refrigerated.



Sugary Enhanced (Se) Types

Has 14% - 35% sugar content in each kernel. These varieties are sweeter and have a high sugar content. They convert sugar to starch more slowly than (Su) types. You can plant when the soil temperature is 62° F. They have only been available since 1970.

Pros - Very Sweet and Tender and Flavorful - More disease resistant than other types - Longer shelf life than (Su) types. Holds 7 days, a little longer if refrigerated. They are great frozen and canned. Easy to grow for home gardeners.

Cons - Harvest damage possible if picked too tender - Sweetness varies with climate and may change from year to year - Less seed vigor, harder to germinate than (Su) types - Needs isolation to produce best flavor.



Supersweet or Shrunken 2 (Sh2) Types

Has 30% - 44% sugar content in each kernel. This type was first described in 1950, with the first successful variety available in 1970. This type is widely used in fresh markets because of its increased shelf-life. Seeds are very shrunken because of the high sugar content during the milk stage. Can be planted when soil temperature is 68° F.

Pros - Very Sweet - Increased sugar content - Longer shelf life once harvested - Less sweetness variation between environments - Good shipping ability, less damage during harvest. Holds up to 14 days when refrigerated.

Cons - Sometimes have a 'crunchy' texture - More difficult to plant and germinate, especially in cold soil, do not plant in soil cooler than 70 F. - Seed is weak and can break during handling or storage - Susceptible to seedling die back - Needs total isolation from other varieties. Not good for freezing or processing. If cross pollinated, ears will produce starch instead of sugar.

Triplesweet Types (SY) Synergistics

This type has only been available since 1999. Each ear has two distinct types of kernels, 75% (Se) and 25% (Sh2) type kernels. This type is more consistent and maintains its sweetness longer, even under drought conditions and from environmental stresses. They are ideal for fresh markets.

Pros - Exceptional Tenderness - Extra sweetness - Extended shelf life over se types - Longer harvest time - Same isolation as (Su) and (Se) types

Cons - Ears can be damaged at harvest - Shelf life not as long as (Sh2) types.

