

Insects or animals may be troublesome, especially corn earworms and raccoons. Contact your local Extension Service for information.

### Keys to Success

- Plant short rows rather than long, single or double rows
- Plant mostly mid and late season varieties for better quality
- Do not plant popcorn, Indian corn, pop corn or field corn in the same area.
- The corn can cross pollinate with other kinds of corn and the sweet corn sweetness can be negatively affected. Sweet corn is the only garden vegetable that can be affected by cross pollination in the current year.

For more information and other helpful educational materials, contact:

Gretchen Voyle, Horticulture Educator  
MSU Extension - Livingston County  
2300 East Grand River Avenue, Suite 111  
Howell, MI 48843

517-546-9850 Fax: 517-546-5154  
<http://co.livingston.mi.us/msuextension>

MSU is an affirmative-action, equal-opportunity employer. Michigan State University Extension programs and materials are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, age, height, weight, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, family status or veteran status.

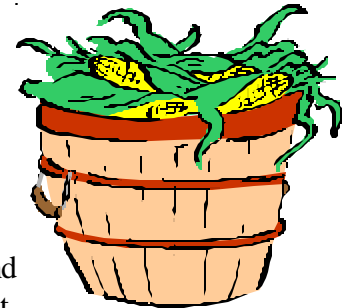
# Green Tips

## Plant and Grow Guides

### *Sweet Corn (GT 103)*

#### The Corn Family

Sweet corn is the only grain that is eaten fresh as a vegetable. In the world agriculture, there are several types of corn. Field corn is not eaten fresh. It is also referred to as dent corn because of the appearance of the dried kernels. It is used dry as livestock and poultry feed or dried and ground into corn meal for people. Indian corn or flint corn is often brightly colored and is starchy like field corn. Popcorn is grown and dried to be eaten popped. But sweet corn is the most popular with many gardeners. Sweet corn is grown in many vegetable gardens and is eaten fresh. Sweet corn is one of the most popular vegetables in the United States.



#### For Big Gardens

Since each plant produces only one or two ears, it would be necessary to plant at least 80 feet of row to produce enough sweet corn for a family of four. Corn is wind pollinated. It must be planted in blocks or squares of three or more rows. Do not plant in one or two rows because the ears will not be pollinated meaning that there will be few kernels on each ear.

#### Wanted: Warm Weather

- Sweet corn is a warm seas crop that requires full sun all day.
- Planting corn before the third week in May is a little risky, but it can give an earlier harvest.

- For an early crop: although frost can injure seedlings, a small number of seeds can be planted early. You are gambling on the unpredictable weather.
- Main season crop: wait to plant most of the corn after danger of frost has passed. This is usually late May.

### **Planting**

When planting, follow the directions on the back of the package or plant seeds 2 to 2 ½ inches deep, 5 to 6 inches apart. Thin plants to 10 to 12 inches apart. Corn can be also planted in “hills” (groups of seeds together, not mounds). Plant 5 or 6 seeds per hill and thin to 3 seedlings. Space hills 3 feet apart. Many people find that the super-sweet corn varieties do not germinate well. If this is found to be a problem, plant more closely than recommended and when seedlings emerge, thin carefully and transplant the small seedlings in the gaps in the rows.

### **Succession Planting**

To lengthen the harvest period, plant early, mid season and late varieties all at the same time. Make successive plantings of mid-season and or late varieties until late June. Wait until each planting is about 2 inches high before the next corn is planted.

### **The Basics**

#### **Soil**

Corn will grow on most soils if the soil is well-drained. It grows best in loam soils. For good germination of seeds, the soil needs to be 60 degrees F or above.

#### **Fertilizer**

Corn is a heavy feeder, especially of nitrogen. Follow your soil test recommendations or use two pounds of 5-20-20 fertilizer per 100 square feet of soil. Apply a high nitrogen fertilizer (21-0-0 or 46-0-0) when the plants are knee high or at the beginning of July.

#### **Weeding**

Keep corn free of weeds and grasses. Cultivate with a hoe but be careful not to injure the shallow roots. A mulch of straw or similar material can be used to suppress weeds and to hold in moisture. Do not remove suckers (side shoots) as this may reduce yields.

### **Watering**

Corn needs lots of water, especially from the time the tassels appear until harvest. This would be one inch of water per week, either from rain or from the hose. More water may be required on sandy soil.

### **Harvesting**

Harvest sweet corn after the silks on the ear turn brown and dry. Corn kernels should be round and filled out. Kernels that are square may be past their prime and the sugars have converted to starch. The husks should appear fresh and not dried out.



### **Storage**

The quality of sweet corn decreases very rapidly after picking. The sugars convert to starch and the unique flavor is lost. Use immediately or store for a short time in the refrigerator. Fresh sweet corn can be frozen or canned, if done correctly.

### **Kinds of sweet corn**

Sweet corn can be divided by colors, sweetness and time of the season they become ripe.. Kernels of different varieties will be yellow, white or a yellow and white mixture often called bi-color. In regards to sweetness, there is standard, sugar enhanced and the sweetest which are called super sweet. The sugar enhanced and super sweets often do not germinate well in cool soil. Corn is also divided into early, mid season and late kinds.

### **Problems**

To help prevent weeds from rotting in cold soil early in the spring, it is possible to use seeds treated with a fungicide. Those that are treated will be colored, like a brilliant pink. The package would also have that information on it.

Seeds must be well covered well with soil so as not to attract birds or animals. If loss of seeds to birds or animals is a continuing problem in a small garden, use a narrow strip of hardware screening or chicken wire over the row until the corn plants just begin to emerge. A strip of screening used to cover eaves troughs can also be used. Be sure to remove before the corn plants are damaged by the screening.