

How to grow: Sweet corn

When to Plant: A warm season crop that should be planted in mid to late April. New sweeter varieties have a smaller, more shriveled seed and will rot in cold soil; do not plant these types until early May. Successive planting is important to spread the harvest over a longer period. Make additional planting when the previous planting is .5-.75" tall.

Space: Plants should be 8-12" apart in rows at least 3' apart. Do not crowd plantings, as weak, spindly, unproductive plants will result. Plant the kernels an inch deep. If many seeds fail to germinate, do not attempt to replace missing plants; replant the entire planting.

Care: Sweet corn requires wind to transfer pollen from the tassel (male) to the ear (female). Plant corn in blocks or several short rows rather than a single row to encourage better pollination. They pollinate poorly in 100° F weather and ears with missing kernels or gaps may result. It may be cross-pollinated by other types of corn, such as field corn, that pollinates at the same time. If there is danger of cross-pollination, a space of 40-50' may be needed as cross-pollination can affect flavor. Sweet corn is a member of the grass family and needs considerably more nitrogen fertilizer than other garden plants. Additional fertilizer sprinkled along the row every several weeks is important. They need regular watering as well because its sparse inefficient root system does not reach to deep soil water. Apply 1-1.5" of water per week. Weed control is necessary, especially in young plantings.

Harvest: They are ready for harvest when the juice in the kernel appears milky as you puncture a kernel with your finger. The ear should be filled to the tip. This ideal stage lasts for only a few days in hot weather, and regular checking for maturity is important. The silks of mature ears are generally completely dry and brown. Twist and pull the ear from the plant by bending the ear down sharply. Use corn immediately or store in a cold place immediately after harvest. Pick corn early in the morning when it is cool outside.



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