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Family Vegetable Garden Series: Use Winter Months to Plan Ahead (#21)

Michigan State University

Cooperative Extension Service

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2 pages

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## SWEET CORN VARIETIES

Early Sunday	(65)	Quicksilver (white)	(79)
Spring Gold	(67)	Gold Cup	(80)
Sprite (bicolor)	(68)	Seneca Scout	(81)
Sundance	(69)	Sugar Loaf (super sweet)	(83)
Comanche	(72)	Merit	(84)
Harmony (bicolor)	(73)	Sugar Dots (bicolor)	(84)
Northern Belle	(74)	Silver Queen (white)	(94)

Days from planting to harvest in ( ).

- There are yellow, white, bicolor, and extra sweet varieties of sweet corn. Later varieties take longer to mature, but usually are better quality than early varieties.
- Popcorn, Indian corn (ornamental corn) and field corn are different types of corn. They are usually harvested when fully mature and dry. Do not plant them next to sweet corn or you may get ears with mixed kernels.

### PROBLEMS

- To help prevent seeds from rotting early in the spring, use seeds treated with a fungicide (see No. 13 in this series: Controlling Pests).
- Insects may be troublesome, especially corn earworms. If a problem arises, see Extension Bulletin E-760(b) or your County Extension Agent for the recommended pesticide to use.
- Make sure seeds are covered well with soil so as not to attract birds and animals.



### KEYS

- Plant a number of short rows rather than a single long row.

### TO

- Plant mostly midseason and late varieties (better quality).

### SUCCESS

- Make successive plantings.

Other bulletins in this series provide additional information on vegetable gardening.

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COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE  
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

## family Vegetable Garden series

EXTENSION BULLETIN E-824(21)

# Sweet Corn

by Elizabeth C. Naegele and J. Lee Taylor  
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### NOTHING SWEETER!

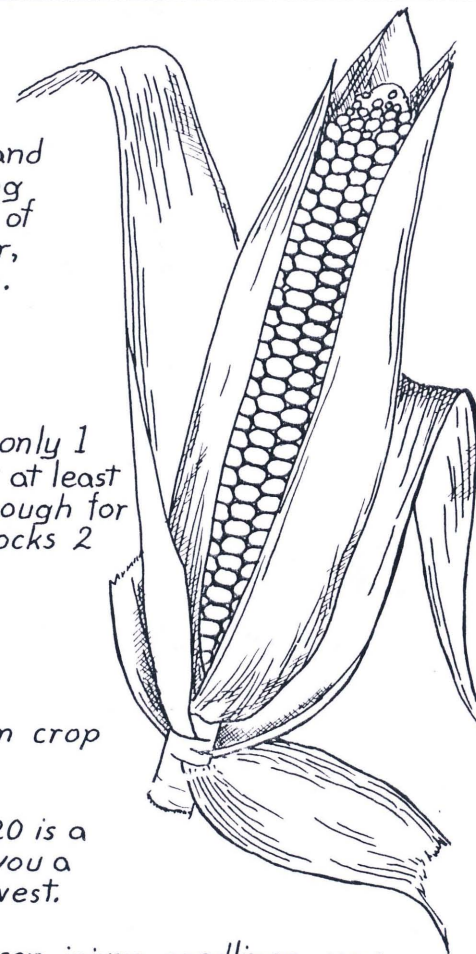
Sweet corn is easy to grow and good for you. There's nothing better than the sweet taste of freshly picked corn! However, it does require a lot of space.

### FOR BIG GARDENS

Since each plant produces only 1 or 2 ears, you need to plant at least 80 feet of row to produce enough for a family of four. (Plant in blocks 2 or more rows wide.)

### WARM SEASON

- Sweet corn is a warm season crop and requires full sun.
- Planting corn before May 20 is a little risky, but it does give you a chance for an earlier harvest.
- Early Crop: Although frost can injure seedlings, you may plant a few seeds (of any variety) from late April to May (when there is still danger of frost). Frost will not injure seeds before they sprout.
- Main Season Crop: Wait to plant most of your corn after danger of frost (late May).



## PLANTING

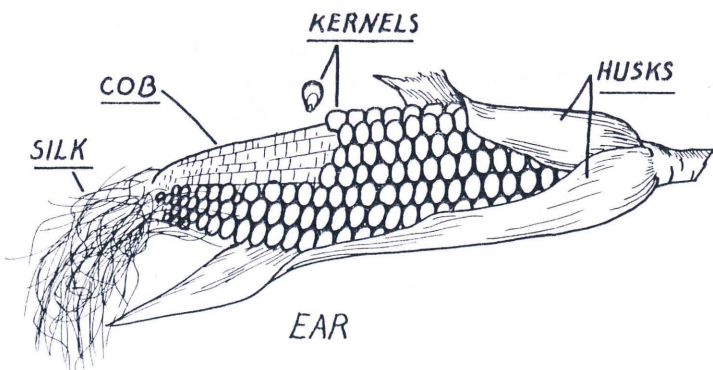
- Plant seeds 2 to 2½ inches deep, 5 or 6 inches apart.  
Thin to 10 to 12 inches apart.  
Space rows 2½ to 3 feet apart.
- Corn can also be planted in "hills" (groups of seeds, not mounds). Plant 5 or 6 seeds per hill and thin to 3 seedlings. Space hills 3 feet apart.

## SUCCESSION PLANTING

- To lengthen the harvest period, plant early, midseason and late varieties all at the same time.
- Make successive plantings of a midseason or late variety until late June.  
Wait until each planting is about 2 inches high before you plant the next one.

## AT LEAST TWO

Since corn is wind-pollinated, it's better to plant at least 2 short rows of one variety rather than 1 long one. This way, pollen is blown from one row to the next. You may also plant in hills. Poor pollination produces cobs with missing kernels.



## THE BASICS

**soil:** Corn will grow in most soils if they are well-drained. It grows best in a clay loam soil.

**fertilizer:** Corn is a heavy feeder and should be fertilized before planting with 2 pounds (4 cups) of 5-20-20 fertilizer per 100 square feet of soil. Apply a high nitrogen fertilizer when plants are knee-high (see No. 2 in this series: Start with Soil).

**weeding:** Keep corn free of weeds. Cultivate with a hoe, but be careful not to injure shallow roots. Or use a mulch which will also keep in moisture (see No. 4 in this series: Keep 'em Growing). Do not remove suckers (side shoots) as this may reduce yields.

**watering:** Corn needs lots of water, especially from the time tassels appear until harvest. If it doesn't get at least 1 inch of rain per week during warm weather, water it.

## HARVESTING

Harvest sweet corn after the silks on the ear turn brown and dry and kernels squirt a milky juice when punctured. A clear juice means the corn is not yet ready; a thick, dough-like substance means it is overripe and tough.

## STORAGE

The quality of sweet corn decreases very rapidly after picking. It loses its sweet taste and becomes starchy. So use it as soon as you can after harvesting. If you must wait, store it in the refrigerator. Freeze or can corn.

