

Tips for Home Gardeners

Sweet Corn

Vegetable Gardening

Plant early to help reduce problems from the corn earworm. The earliest planting should be made seven days before the average last frost date for your area. Plant every two to three weeks to provide a continuous supply of sweet corn. Remember to plant the same variety in a block of at least three rows side-by-side at each planting. This will help to ensure good pollination and well-filled ears.



When planting sweet corn, drop two or three seeds every 8 to 12 inches in the row, and cover to about ½ to 1 inch deep. After the seeds sprout and the plants are 3 to 4 inches tall, thin to one plant per hill. Sidedress a 100-foot row with ¾ to 1 ½ pounds of ammonium nitrate when the plants are about 12 inches high and again when the plants are 24 to 36 inches high. One pint of fertilizer is about 1 pound.

Dust or spray silks with Sevin about every two to three days after silks first appear and until silks begin to dry. This will help to reduce corn earworm damage. Harvest sweet corn early in the morning while it is still cool. Chill or cook immediately after harvesting. Sweet corn that is ready to harvest should have a well-filled ear. Kernels should be bright and plump, and their juice should be milky. New high sugar varieties have more room for error in harvesting because they are sweeter and stay sweet longer. Recommended early maturing varieties include Aztec or Seneca Horizon.

Mid-season varieties are Funk's G90, Merit or Bonanza. Late-season varieties are Silver Queen (white), Gold Queen, Lochief or Golden Cross Bantam. Three ounces of seed will plant 100 feet of row. Try some of the super sweet and enhanced varieties of sweet corn. They are sweeter than regular sweet corn and hold their sweetness longer. The super sweets need to be isolated from field corn or regular sweet corn since they lose some of their sweetness when pollinated by these other types of corn.

If you eat corn on the cob, try either SE or Sweet Gene® or improved super sweets. Varieties: How Sweet It Is (AAS), Honey-N-Pearl (AAS), Summer Sweet #7201Y, #8101 W, #781W, #7620Y, #7630Y, #7701Y, 8102 BC, Champ, Miracle, Argent, Merlin, Sir Galahad bi-color, Seneca Starshine, Platinum Lady, Summer Flavor, #79BC bi-color and Incredible. The super sweets don't sprout well in cool soils, so wait until soil has warmed considerably before planting.

Fertilize lantanas twice during the growing season, once at planting and again in mid-to-late summer. Spread a slow-release fertilizer over the planted area; follow label recommendations.