

Corn

Zea mays

Corn, or maize as it is called in most parts of the world, was domesticated from wild grasses in the Western hemisphere many thousands of years ago, but did not make it to Europe until Columbus's time. Like all grasses, corn depends on wind for pollination. Pollen grains are blown from male flowers, borne on tassels, to female "silks," with each silk representing a potential kernel.

TIP – Corn seeds and newly sprouted seedlings are bird favorites. To prevent pilfering, cover seeded rows with row cover or another type of barrier.

Location and soil Corn requires full sun, moist, well-drained soil, and plenty of space. Plant it in blocks so that pollen can move freely from male to female flowers—the more complete the pollination, the fuller your ears of corn will be.

When to Plant Wait until the average last frost date has passed and the soil has warmed to at least 55°F to sow. Make successive plantings every week or two to extend the harvest.

Seed depth and Spacing Sow seeds 1-2 inches deep directly into the garden. Space them 4-6 inches apart in rows that are 2-3 feet apart. Keep in mind that four short rows will produce better results than two long rows.

Germination Seeds should germinate in 4 to 7 days, but can take 2 weeks or more in cold soil.

Thinning Thin seedlings to 8-12 inches apart when they are about 6 inches high.

Care A steady supply of water—1 to 2 inches a week—is crucial in the period after tassels develop. If summer weather is dry, set up soaker hose between rows, and mulch with straw or another moisture-conserving material.

Pests Corn earworms can get inside ears and consume kernels just as they reach maximum sweetness. Prevent their entry by applying several drops of vegetable oil to silk as it begins to turn brown. Timing is important: too early, and the oil may prevent pollination; too late and the worms will already be inside.

Fertilize Corn requires ample nitrogen throughout its growing life. Fortify planting rows with compost and a high-nitrogen fertilizer such as blood meal, and side-dress them with compost or a balanced fertilizer 1 month after planting, and again when tassels form.

Harvest Harvest ears when they are filled to the tip, and when silks appear brown and dry. A pierced kernel should exude a milky liquid.

Nutrition Good source of thiamin, niacin, Vitamin B6, and minerals including iron, magnesium, and phosphorus.

	Golden Beauty AAS Winner, 1955	Bi-Licious	Silver Queen
	 <small>©Nova-Photo-Graphik</small>	 <small>©Nova-Photo-Graphik</small>	 <small>©Nova-Photo-Graphik</small>
Description	Very early standard hybrid (Su) produces deep golden kernels. Resistant to wilt and productive.	Mid-season bi-color SE (sugar enhanced) hybrid is disease resistant. Very sweet.	Classic white (Su) hybrid corn introduced in 1955. Sweet, crisp, and very tasty.
Ear size; rows	7 inches; 12-14 rows	8 ½ inches; 14-16 rows	8-9 inches; 14-16 rows
Culture	Standard hybrids tolerate colder soil than new supersweet (Sh2) types.	Provide plenty of water throughout the growing season.	Good choice if corn earworms are a problem. Tight husks impede entry.
Days to harvest	70-75	78	92