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virginia home food production

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SWEET CORN

DEPARTMENT OF HORTICULTURE

BLACKSBURG, VIRGINIA

Reprinted January 1981

MH 405

ENVIRONMENTAL PREFERENCES

LIGHT: sunny

SOIL: deep, well-drained loam

FERTILITY: rich

pH: 6.0-7.0

TEMPERATURES: warm (60-75°F)

MOISTURE: average



CULTURE

PLANTING: seed after danger of frost is past

SPACING: 9-12" x 24-36"
minimum two rows side by side
preferably four rows to insure
good pollination.

HARDINESS: tender annual

FERTILIZER NEEDS: heavy feeder,
sidedress when plants are 12-18
inches high (1½ oz. (30-0-0) per
10 ft. of row), (½ cup of ammonium
nitrate per 25 feet of row)

CULTURAL PRACTICES:

Sweet corn varieties differ a
great deal in quality and time of
maturity.

Plant for early sweet corn just a few days after the average date of the last killing frost. For a longer harvest period plant early, midseason, and late maturing varieties or make successive plantings. Make successive plantings of the same variety every two weeks until July 15. Use only the earliest maturing varieties for July plantings. The fall maturing sweet corn will almost always be the highest quality because of the cool nights in September.

For the early maturing varieties that produce small plants, plant in rows 30 inches apart with plants eight to nine inches apart in the row. For medium to large plant varieties, use a 36 inch to 30 inch row spacing

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Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, and September 30, 1977, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. W. R. Van Dresser, Dean, Extension Division, Cooperative Extension Service, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia 24061; M. C. Harding, Sr., Administrator, 1890 Extension Program, Virginia State University, Petersburg, Virginia 23803.

with plants 12 inches apart in the row. Plant at least three or four rows of the same variety in a block for good pollination and full ears.

It is not necessary to remove "suckers" that form. With adequate fertility these "suckers" may increase yields.

Harvest in the cool temperatures of early morning. If corn is harvested under high temperatures, remove the field heat by either plunging the ears in cold water or placing them in the refrigerator. This maintains the fresh-from-the-garden quality. Normally, sweet corn is ready for harvest about 20 days after the first silk appears on the ear.

COMMON PROBLEMS

DISEASES: Stewart's wilt (bacterial disease spread by flea beetle), smut

INSECTS: corn earworm, European corn borer, flea beetles

OTHER: birds eating seed, raccoon eating mature ears of corn.

CULTURAL: poor kernel development - failure to fill out to the tip. (dry weather during silking stages, planting too close, poor fertility, especially potassium deficiency, too few rows in block, poor natural pollination).

NUTRITIONAL VALUE

Sweet corn, 5 x 1 3/4"

	<u>Grams</u>	<u>Calories</u>
1 ear . . .	140	70
	<u>% U.S. RDA</u>	
	<u>Vitamin A</u>	<u>Vitamin C</u>
	6	10

HARVESTING AND STORAGE

DAYS TO MATURITY: 63-100

HARVEST: when husk is still green, kernels full-size and yellow or white color to the tip of the ear, at "milky" stage (use thumbnail to puncture a kernel if liquid is clear the corn is immature, if milky, then it's ready, no sap means you're late). Matures about 20 days after first silk strands appear, more quickly in hot weather.

APPROXIMATE YIELDS: (per 10 ft. row) 5-10 lbs. or roughly 10-20 ears

AMOUNT TO RAISE PER PERSON: 20-30 lbs. or roughly 40-60 ears

STORAGE: refrigerate immediately to prevent sugars from turning to starch, cold (32°F), moist (95% RH) conditions, 4-8 days.

PRESERVATION: can or freeze