

Tips for Growing Sweet Corn

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Sweet corn requires plenty of space, but can be grown successfully in smaller home gardens when following a few simple tips.

- **Location, location, location.** Sweet corn performs best in fertile, well-drained soils in full sun. Plant where it will not shade other vegetables.
- **Popular varieties** include Silver Queen (white), How Sweet It Is (white), Sweet Ice (white), Sweet Riser (yellow), and Early Sunglow (yellow). Isolate different varieties so that crossing does not occur.
- **Planting dates** in Florida are: February - April (North); January - April (Central); and October - March (South). Plant after the danger of frost.
- **Plant in blocks.** Corn is wind pollinated. As grains of pollen are shed by the tassels that grow from the top of plant, the wind helps the pollen reach the strands of silk that emerge from newly formed ears. To make sure silks are adequately showered with pollen, grow corn in blocks of at least 3 short rows rather than 1-2 long rows. Rows should be spaced 28 inches apart, with plants spaced 6 to 8 inches in the row.
- **They are heavy feeders.** To increase yields, use ammonium nitrate nitrogen to push more growth on the plants before ears begin to form. The general recommendation is to top-dress 40 pounds of nitrogen per acre before the tassel appears in the whorl. This equates to 120 pounds of 33-0-0 ammonium nitrate fertilizer per acre. For backyard garden plots, the amount of ammonium nitrate needed is reduced to 2.75 pounds per 1,000 square feet or approximately 0.3 pounds per 100 square feet of planted corn. This extra growth allows each plant to produce additional ears.
- **Suckering** is the practice of removing side shoots at the base of the main stalk. Because there are no proven benefits from this practice, it is not recommended.
- **Succession planting** will provide a constant supply of sweet corn for the table. Plant blocks of corn 10 to 14 days apart, or plant early, midseason, and late varieties at the same time in separate blocks.
- **Insect management** for sweet corn may be necessary. Find info here: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ig158>

References:

Florida Vegetable Gardening Guide: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/vh021>

Vegetable Gardening in Florida: <http://ifasbooks.ifas.ufl.edu/p-185-vegetable-gardening-in-florida.aspx>