



Sweet corn

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A Short History of Sweet Corn

The cultivation of corn (maize) (*Zea mays* ssp. *mays*) began over 8,000 years ago in Mesoamerica, a geographical area which includes central and southern Mexico, and Central America. Corn was first domesticated from teosinte (*Zea mexicana*), an annual grass native to this region. Wild teosinte mostly has value as a fodder plant, as it provides very little edible seeds.

The first archaeological evidence of domesticated corn comes from the San Marcos cave in Tehuacan and the Guilá Naquitz cave in the state of Oaxaca, Mexico. The corn in San Marcos cave is dated to over 5,000 years ago. The cobs from the Guilá Naquitz cave were dated to over 6200 years old.

Home gardeners who want to grow corn may choose from several different varieties including popcorn, dent corn, flint corn, pod corn, and sweet corn. Here we'll focus on growing sweet corn as it is the most popular for the home gardener.

Sweet corn is one of the most popular summer vegetable crops grown in India. Like peppers, pumpkins, squash and beans, sweet corn is native to the New World where it has been cultivated for more than 4,000 years. Sweet corn is a monoecious plant, which means it has a separate male and female flower on each stalk. The tassel is the male flower, which produces the pollen, and the ear is the female flower (Figure 1). For kernels to form on each ear, pollen from the tassel must be deposited on the silk of the ear. Sweet corn is wind pollinated, although bees are often seen collecting nectar and pollen from the tassels. For small plantings of sweet corn, a series of short rows rather than a single, long row will improve the chances for efficient pollination. Sweet corn typically produces one or two ears per plants.



Sweet Corn Varieties

There are three main types of sweet corn available: Sh2, (super sweet), SUSU (normal sugary), and SESE (sugary enhancer). Sweet corn can also be classified by its color: white, yellow, or bi-colored.

Where and When to Plant

Plant your corn in full sun and well after any risk of frost. Your corn should receive at least eight hours of sunlight a day. Soil temperatures should be about 60 degrees F for proper germination, and slightly higher for the super sweet varieties. Generally, May and June are good months to plant. You can check your soil temperature with an electronic soil tester if you have any doubts. If you want an early start on your corn, you can consider covering your soil with a plastic mulch, such as clear or black polyethylene, to help warm the soil and promote germination.



Contact Us

Contact information for Taj Group companies in India.

TAJ AGRO INTERNATIONAL

(A Division of Taj Pharmaceuticals Limited)

<http://www.tajagroproducts.com>

E-mail :

tajagroproducts@gmail.com

tajagrinternational@gmail.com