

Sweet Corn

(Zea mays var. saccharata)

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Most varieties of sweet corn do well in the Top End of the Northern Territory during the dry season.

Sweet corn can be planted at any time of the year. Choosing a well drained site during the Wet or planting on ridges or hills is important. The seeds are sown direct into the soil at a depth of 3-4 cm and the soil is lightly compacted over them. Space the plants at 20 cm in the row with 80 cm between rows. Planting two or three short rows rather than one long row greatly facilitates pollination. Poor pollination can be experienced during continuous rainy weather. It is important to keep the area free of weeds as they can considerably affect yield.



FERTILISER

Sweet corn responds well to fertiliser and compost or well rotted animal manure at about 2 kg/m² dug into the area. To obtain high yields, it will be necessary to incorporate a complete fertiliser mix into the row at 70 g/m² before planting. A side dressing of urea (20 g/m²) or sulphate of ammonia (50 g/m²) should be given when the plants are 30-40 cm high. Care should be taken to avoid dropping fertiliser down the funnel of the plant. During wet conditions it may be necessary to repeat side dressing due to leaching of the soil.

WATER

Adequate water is essential at all times. If the plant suffers from lack of water during tasselling, poor fertilisation will occur resulting in cobs with gaps in the rows of kernels.



HARVESTING

Most varieties will be ready for picking 79-80 days after planting. Ears are ready for picking when the silks have withered (approximately three weeks after they appear). Check a few ears first by opening the sheath. The grains should be well filled yet soft and milky when picked. Sweet corn ears or kernels can be kept for a considerable time by freezing, with little deterioration in quality.

INSECTS

Corn ear worm (*Heliothis* sp.) is the main pest. The grubs enter the ear and, once there, are difficult to control. It is advisable to spray at weekly intervals from tasselling till the silks dry off.

For information on insect control, please refer to the DPIFM Entomology website at <http://pestinfo.nt.gov.au/>

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