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.

**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.

### Varieties

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