

County Agent News  
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February 23, 2015

### Super Sweet Corn

Unless you have a favorite variety and just choose that same variety every year choosing sweet corn seed can be confusing. There are now five basic sweet corn types and then you have color choices, maturity, plant height, and other factors to consider.

Selecting types can be confusing. Your personal taste preferences and your intended uses are both important. Let's go through the choices.

1. "Normal Sugary" (su). Sugars convert rapidly to starches after picking. Old fashioned corn flavor. I love this one for picking out of the garden, walking to the house, microwave in the husk for about 3 minutes, and eat. Not a good choice for picking midweek for a weekend camping trip or barbeque.
2. "Sugary Enhanced" (se) and (se+). These varieties have different genes for tenderness and sweetness. The conversion of sugar to starch after harvest is slowed making them keep better after harvest. Need to be isolated by distance or time of pollination from (sh2), (ssw), and dry or popcorn types.
3. "Synergistic" (syn). Each ear has 75% (se) kernels and 25% (sh2) kernels giving a sweet blend of tenderness and crispness. You'll want to let these varieties get a little more plump before picking. Should be isolated from (sh2) and dry/popcorn.
4. "Super Sweet" (sh2). The most popular type for farmers markets. These varieties are generally the sweetest and have the slowest sugar to starch conversion after harvest. They store very well in the refrigerator. Isolate from all other types except (SSW).
5. "SuperSeedWare" (SSW). An improvement on (sh2) types for better germination in cool soils. Isolate from all but (sh2) types.

Other factors you will want to consider are color, plant size and maturity. Color is strictly a personal choice but can add some variety and interest for a neighborhood get together or a family gathering especially for youngsters. Traditional sweet corn is yellow but bicolor (mixed white and yellow kernels), white, and even red, black, and multicolored sweet corn varieties are available. Some varieties like "Northern XtraSweet" are available in both yellow and bicolor options. Plant size can be important if you have a small garden or if you garden area is exposed to high winds. Some of the taller varieties are more sensitive to nutrient deficiencies causing stalks to tip over but short varieties can go down as well. If you are going to try raising sweet corn in a container the short stature varieties usually work best. Burpee's offers a variety called "On Deck" which they claim is great for containers. Maturity is important. If you are planting late or in a location prone to early frosts you may want to pick a short maturity variety (65-70 days). You can extend your harvesting period by seeding varieties with varying maturity or by seeding the same variety multiple times over several weeks.

Johnny's Select Seeds gives these "10 Golden Rules for Growing Sweet Corn".

1. **Isolate.** Plan to separate small plantings of Super Sweets by distance, 25 feet (acreage plantings, 100 feet) from non-Super Sweet varieties, or by time, a 10-day planting date/maturity difference. Extensive crossing with non-Super Sweets will result in tough, starchy kernels in both types.

2. **Monitor soil temperature.** Delay sowing fungicide-treated seeds until soil temperature is at least 55-60°F (13-16°C). (Untreated seeds need a minimum soil temperature of 65°F (18°C).
3. **Adjust planter.** Super Sweet corn seed is smaller than normal corn seed; there are 1/3-1/4 times as many seeds per pound. Set planter for proper seed size and planting depth (3/4-1”), and allow for germination percentage to arrive at a final stand of 18,000-22,000 plants per acre (7-10” apart in rows 36” apart).
4. **Ensure adequate moisture.** Super Sweet seed must absorb twice the moisture to germinate as normal corn. Avoid dry-soil planting.
5. **Fertilize.** Super Sweets have the same high fertility requirements as normal corn. Fertilize as required preplant, and use a high-phosphate starter in the planter.
6. **Make a smooth seed bed.** Uniform depth placement of seed is more important with Super Sweets.
7. **Plant on the shallow side.** With good soil moisture, ideal depth is 3/4-1” to ensure even emergence.
8. **Note the half-silk date.** Upon tasseling, watch for and record the date on which about half the plants show silk.
9. **Harvest on time.** Field will be ready to pick beginning 18-24 days after half-silk, depending on temperatures during this period. Warmer weather favors earlier maturity. Delay of harvest for a few days is permissible as the Super Sweet tenderness and sweetness hold into the plumper kernel grades.
10. **Refrigerate.** Super Sweets are approximately twice as high as other corns in sugar content at harvest and sweeter to an even greater degree after picking. This is due to slower sugar-to-starch conversion. For best quality, however, cool corn following harvest. Hold and ship under refrigeration

#### Private Applicator Certification

If you haven't renewed your private pesticide applicator certificate yet you have three more chances in Burke County. I will be holding recertification meetings next week in Columbus and Powers Lake and will hold recertification meeting in Bowbells on March 31. If you need to purchase or use restricted use pesticides you must be certified. If you are not currently certified and need to become certified you can attend a training session and take a short open book exam. If you cannot attend a training session and need to recertify or become certified, you can make an appointment to take an open book exam at the Burke County Extension Office.

#### Private Applicator Certification:

March 5, 9:00 am, Columbus Fire Hall

March 6, 9:00 am, Powers Lake American Legion Hall

March 31, 9:00 am, Burke County Courthouse Community Room, Bowbells

For more information about either of these topics give us a call at 701-377-2927 or email me at [dan.folske@ndsu.edu](mailto:dan.folske@ndsu.edu)