

Baby Corn

Zea mays is a member of the Poaceae (grass) family.

Some corn varieties, such as Baby and Baby Asian, have been developed especially for baby corn production. You can also grow regular sweet corn to pick young. Any well-adapted sweet corn cultivar will work, but some buyers prefer cultivars that produce longer ears. You may also want to choose a variety that bears more than one ear per stalk. Silver Queen, Early Extra-Sweet, Early Sunglow, How Sweet It Is, and Kandy Korn are typical varieties used for baby sweet corn. Keep in mind that the Baby and Baby Asian varieties are different from these sweet corn varieties that are simply picked young.

Sweet corn grown for the edible, tender immature ear is an annual, requiring warm, well-prepared soil and full sun exposure.

Market Information

The super-sweet varieties taste sweet, but they are not the same as the Asian varieties. Baby corn must be sold fresh, and should be part of a delivery made every day to a given market.

Culture

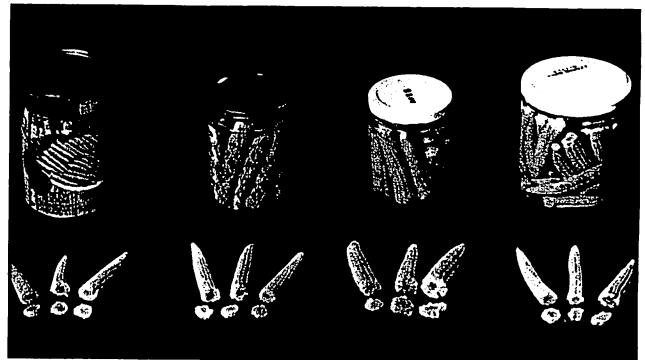
Propagation and care. Sow seeds a bit closer than for regular corn, 6 to 8 inches apart in 30- to 40-inch rows. Do not plant too densely for the amount of nitrogen in your soil or you may get some plants without ears. Water requirements are similar to those for regular sweet corn, except that because it is a short-season crop, baby corn won't need as much total water.

Pick baby corn ears about 1 or 2 days after silks emerge. Beyond that point they will not be sufficiently tender. The variety planted and soil fertility determine the length of the ears. It's best to plant varieties that will bear multiple ears.

Pest and weed problems. Baby corn is a relatively pest-free crop. Ear worm is not a problem, since you harvest before damage would be done. For the same reason, smut is only rarely a problem. Manage other pests, such as seed corn maggot, as you would for sweet corn.



Harvested baby sweet corn ears are 3 to 4 inches long. (Photo: Hunter Johnson)



Most baby corn is processed and packaged for later sale. (Photo: Robert Kotch)

Baby corn can be grown fairly easily without chemicals. By incorporating residue soon after you harvest, you can add significant organic matter that will decay much more quickly than if you were to let the plants get old and dry down.

Sources

Seed

Johnny's Selected Seeds, Foss Hill Road, Albion, ME
04910

Le Jardin du Gourmet, P.O. Box 75, St. Johnsbury Center,
VT 05863

Nichols Garden Nursery, 1190 North Pacific Highway,
Albany, OR 97321

Park Seed Co., Cokesbury Road, Greenwood, SC
29647-0001

Shepherd's Garden Seeds. Shipping Office, 30 Irene
Street, Torrington, CT 06790

NOTE: Many seed companies sell regular sweet corn
varieties that can be harvested as baby corn.

More information

Sunset Magazine. 1986. What's with these little
guys of the vegetable kingdom? *Sunset*, May 1986,
pp. 282-84.

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