Sweet Corn Growing Tips



VIDEO

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TRANSCRIPT:

TERRY ALLEN:
Hi. I'm Terry with SEEDS OF CHANGE™. And today, we're out in the corn field, and I wanted to talk to you about the anatomy of the corn plant.

So here at the top we have the tassel. This produces the pollen — you can see when I shake it all the pollen coming down.

The tassel of this plant has just recently formed and it will drop pollen down onto the ears as soon as they set their silks out. You can see two just beginning ears. First you see the tassel, then you see the baby ears. These ears are just forming and don't yet have any silks. But this ear over here already has a silk.

If you have any problems with the corn earworm, now's the time to put a drop of the corn oil on the tip of the silks. That prevents the corn earworm from climbing in through the silks and getting down in.

Each stalk has a primary ear and a secondary ear. And sometimes if you're lucky, you'll get a third ear. These will mature later.

Ooh — look at those sweet corn ears. The silks are out and they're starting to turn slightly

brown. We’ve only got a couple more weeks to wait.

[Several weeks later.] Let’s see if we can find some ripe ears of corn. The silks are completely brown and dry on this ear. And I’m squeezing it — I can feel the kernels are plump inside there and it’s plump all the way to the tip. This is the primary ear. There’s a secondary ear down here — it’s not quite as far along, but that one might be ready, too, I feel the kernels are plump. Let’s pull some and see. This is a beautifully ripe ear of corn.

On these perfectly ripe ears of corn, you can see that the kernels are plump in straight rows and filled all the way to the tip.

FARM HAND:
[Translation from Spanish] Okay, when you have the silks dark, and when here it's a little tender up top, when it's a bit tender—it's ready.

TERRY ALLEN:
This is a secondary ear. It’s the second ear down on the stalk. It’s smaller. This one was not quite ripe yet. Here you can see that the kernels at the tip have not plumped out, and you can see that the kernels going along the main line here have quite a big gap in between the rows, so they could really plump out and fill in some more. The tip has just been started to be eaten here by a corn earworm, and this golden greeny, sandy looking stuff is the corn earworm frass. And frass is a really just a polite word for caterpillar poo. So, if you’re squeamish about caterpillars and you want your corn organic, you just cut off the tip before you look at that little part. You can bring it in the kitchen and use a knife, or you can use your clippers right there. [Cuts off the tip.] Alright.

This ear got very well pollinated, though. You can see that each kernel is present in nice straight rows.

Here you see the full spectrum: from a poorly pollinated secondary ear on the left with very few kernels; to a gorgeous, fully mature ear on the right with nice ripe, succulent kernels.

Oh, this really could have matured a couple more days. But we’re hungry now and [takes a bite] fresh corn just picked is an unbeatable flavor that you never forget.

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