

Kee evaluates new sweet corn varieties

NEWARK, Del. — Sweet corn is an important Delmarva vegetable crop. Delaware growers produce between 4,000 and 4,500 acres each year. Over half is yellow sweet corn for processing. The rest is grown for fresh market use. Most of this is white sweet corn for sale through local roadside markets, though a good bit of both is shipped to destinations throughout the Northeast.

According to University of Delaware extension vegetable specialist Ed Kee, most fresh market customers prefer Silver Queen, a white kernalled variety with excellent flavor, keeping quality and appearance. Unfortunately for growers, however, production of this variety can be erratic and it matures late, usually taking over 90 days to reach harvest.

During the last 10 years several seed companies have begun breeding programs aimed at developing good looking, high quality, early maturing white sweet corn varieties to fill the gap before Silver Queen comes on. As a result, several promising new hybrids are now available commercially.

Last summer Kee evaluated 27 of these new hybrids under local growing conditions at the

University of Delaware Georgetown substation. All were planted on May 23. Each variety was subjected to three different herbicide treatments to test for adverse reactions. In addition, 100 seeds of each variety were subjected to a stress test at 50 degrees F in a germination chamber of the Delaware State Department of Agriculture.

Here are Kee's comments on several of the most promising entries.

White Satin (63 days, Agway) and Pearl White (65 days, Agway) looked good with ears 7 1/2-inches long and excellent tip fill. Pearl White's ear set up higher on the stalk than White Satin's ear.

Chalice (67 days, Rogers) had excellent eating quality with an ear that measured 8 1/2-inches long. Summer Sweet (73 days, Abbott and Cobb) had an attractive 8-inch ear set fairly high on the stalk.

Another attractive variety that will fill the harvest gap before Silver Queen comes along was Silver Sensation (73 days, Southern States). Silver Treat (73 days, Agway) produced a 9-inch ear which was similar to that of Silver Queen, and had excellent tip fill. It also set up high on the stalk. Silver Prince (90 days, Harris) had a

long, attractive ear with excellent quality that matured a few days before Silver Queen.

One experimental number stood out over other numbered lines. Asgrow's XPH 2554W was ready to harvest at 73 days and had a 9-inch ear with excellent tip fill.

Kee advises growers who are interested in trying any of these new varieties to do so on a small scale the first year. Growing conditions especially heat during tasseling and silking vary from year to year on Delmarva and could influence yield and quality.

Regarding the herbicides screened in the trial, Kee says it would be premature to draw any firm conclusions from only one year's data. However, he was reassured to see that the standard labeled treatments were safe across all varieties. Shorter season hybrids did seem to be adversely affected by certain materials which are not currently labeled.

Kee plans to continue this work next summer. He will report on the results of the sweet corn variety trial December 6 at the Peninsula Horticultural Society's vegetable meeting at the Wicomico Youth and Civic Center in Salisbury, Md. Watch local papers for details on that event.



U of D extension vegetable specialist Ed Kee checks ears on some early white sweet corn varieties which look promising for use on Delmarva.

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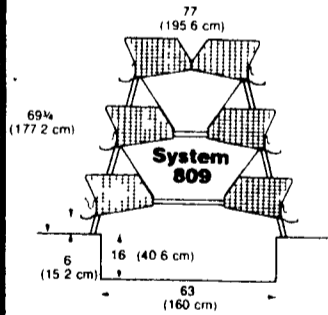
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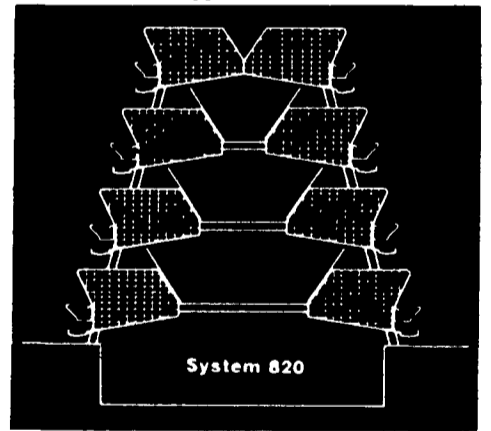
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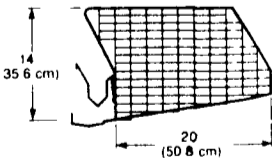
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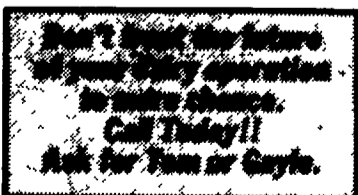
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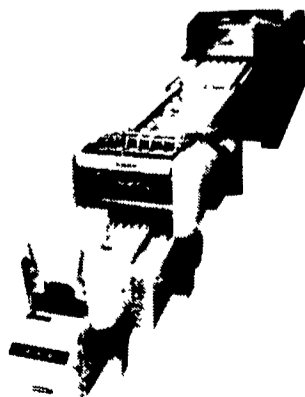


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