

Follow These Guidelines

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sell that corn." Said Hassell, "Please do not buy cheap seed," he said.

"Don't bargain on the price of corn seed. If you do, you're going to get just what you asked for."

Producers, he said, need to ask "as many questions as possible of the seed company representative."

Also, growers need to determine, from their customers, whether they want certain characteristics, such as crunchiness (the sweet breeds are very crunchy, he said), or creamy (some SEs provide that, but some SEs can also be very crunchy). Some bicolor can provide large kernel size, and that can differ from customer to customer.

Hassell noted that researchers have come up with a way of measuring the toughness of the peri-

carp. "Every silk is attached to two kernels," he said. So it's important to ensure that no damage is done to the silk and enough moisture is available.

When the corn is under drought stress, other challenges can prevail. In one season, according to Hassell of Clemson University, sweet corn test plots went in, with a range of 60-90 day maturities. That same droughty year, all the varieties "matured at the same time," he said. "It was a very humbling experience."

Sweet corn manufacturers follow a variety of procedures to come up with a corn that will germinate between 50 degrees and 96 degrees Fahrenheit. And contrary to popular belief, the largest seed in the bag is not necessarily the seed that will germinate best. "Sometimes the largest seed is the worst seed," he said.

His research has indicated that the small seed germinated the best and the medium seed the worst.

Also, some quality control at seed companies was questionable. Researchers were seeding "differences in damage to kernel" by the machines that handle the corn.

Growers should understand that if growing the shrunken varieties, most will germinate between 64-68 degrees Fahrenheit.

The SEs will germinate in the upper 50s or lower 60s of soil temperature.

Sweet corn is a plant that responds to heat, measured in heat units. Maturity, said Hassell, varies with heat units, not days to maturity. Growing degree days, used to determine heat units, are based on a comparison of maximum and minimum temperatures to base temperature.

In general, the shrunken, or SH2 varieties, have poor germination in cold soil temperatures. The SEs

require less soil heat. The sweet breeds germinate real well under cool soil temperatures. The SU5s germinate under field corn soil conditions.

For growers who want to follow consecutive plantings, don't plant until the youngest corn in the field has the first two leaves appear. In the spring. When summer arrives, plant on a weekly basis.

A uniform planting depth is recommended, not deeper than 1 to 1 1/2 inches. Look seriously at an air planter to provide a consistent, uniform depth, noted Hassell.

"Prepare that seedbed," he said. And ensure that "your planter provides the same uniform depth." Growers must, above all, ask the questions necessary of their equipment and seed representatives.

At harvest, growers should realize it is critical to keep the corn away from heat. Many times, the corn is piled up in the wagon and sits for hours in the sun.

"Field heat takes away sweetness," said Hassell. Field heat reduces the amount of sugar in the corn. Some growers used forced air or hydrocooling in trailers to get rid of the field heat.

More about the fruit and vegetable conference will appear in the next issue of *Grower & Marketer*, special pages of *Lancaster Farming*, scheduled March 13.



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