

HOME GARDEN . . .

main crops heavier soils usually give a higher yield over a longer period. Organic matter can be increased by digging in a green crop, but particularly in colder districts better results are obtained if 1 cub. ft. of soil is removed at 2ft. to 3ft. intervals and the holes, except for the top 3in. or 4in., are filled with manure (preferably with partly rotted, fermenting stable manure).

Seed can be sown in soil placed on top or, preferably, at the edge of the manure. Rows should be at least 4ft. apart; this is known as the hill system of sowing. The ground should if possible be level after sowing to facilitate any necessary watering.

Apart from watering and weed control very little attention should be needed after plants are established. With trailing varieties it may be necessary to pinch out the ends of leaders when they are about 18in. long to encourage the development of laterals. Plants can be trained by pegging the runners with sticks.

The fruit of marrows should be cut when young, preferably before the skin hardens to the extent that it cannot be broken easily by the thumbnail; 10in. to 12in. is a good size. As marrows increase in size their flavour usually is reduced and the seeds increase in size. In favourable seasons, too, early cutting of the fruit induces more to develop. It is therefore inadvisable to allow fruit to reach full maturity unless very large specimens are wanted or fruit is to be stored for winter.

Butternut Squash

A small, pear-shaped bush variety of squash called Butternut is becoming more widely known. It has been grown in the U.S.A. for many years and is now produced commercially in some areas of New Zealand. The fruits, which are up to 1ft. long, have a sweet flavour and the necks are solid flesh. The small seed cavities are in the lower, bowl-shaped ends. The variety keeps quite well if stored under good conditions.

Rhubarb

Rhubarb responds to liberal manuring, but production from even the healthiest well-fed crowns is liable to be affected if heavy harvesting is continued too long. Pulling the stalks exhausts the plant, and the crown must be given an adequate period in which to develop the leaves which enable it to build up stores of plant food for the following season. Most varieties are dormant for a time and the leaves must be allowed to do their work before dormancy occurs. Beds should not become dry, and those of ever-bearing varieties that lack plant food should be watered with liquid manure.

Sweet Corn

Sweet corn is not a hardy vegetable. It thrives in warm, sunny conditions, and within limits the higher the temperature is and the more sunlight it receives the more likely it is to succeed. It can be grown in most districts in New Zealand, as it is less sensitive to cold than either the tomato or the snap bean, but it is not much grown in gardens in far southern districts.

Seed should be sown 1in. to 2in. deep. If planted in rows, plants should be 12in. apart and the rows 36in. apart; clumps should be 36in. apart and, though it is usually advisable to sow about 7 or 8 seeds at each clump to allow for failures, only 4 or 5 of the strongest plants should be left after they reach a height of about 2in. The number of seeds per ounce varies from about 100 to 230 according to variety.

Sweet corn matures in about 70 to 100 days and seed can be sown successively.

Sweet corn is not specially sensitive to drought and usually bears earlier on light, sandy or peat soils.

Suckers often develop at the base of the plant during autumn and home gardeners sometimes remove them in an effort to increase the size and encourage early development of the cobs. However, usually the practice is more likely to result in loss than gain, as the removal of large suckers results in loss of plant tissue which is capable of elaborating plant nutrients into substances which go to the development of the cobs. It may also result in serious plant damage.

Correct Harvesting Stage

To be at its best sweet corn should be harvested at the correct stage of development. It retains its finest flavour and texture only for a short time, especially with early varieties. Corn cobs should be harvested in the milk stage while they are plump, juicy, and firm and the silk is fairly dry. The cob can be tested by pressing the thumb nail into one of the kernels. If a milky substance is forced out, the cob is suitable for harvesting; if the juice is watery, the cob is immature; if a doughy substance comes out, the corn is usually considered over-ripe.

Corn should be used as soon as convenient after harvesting, because its sugar changes to starch within about 36 hours. For those who want corn at its best that is a good reason for growing it in the home garden rather than buying it. If corn is not be used soon after harvesting, it is best cooled and held at as near freezing point as possible, as then loss of sugar is greatly retarded.

It used to be common practice for home gardeners to grow corn on "hills", but it is now generally agreed that there is little justification for the practice, as the raised soil surface about the corn tends to shed rain and makes watering difficult. Earthing up the stems of tall varieties is justified where winds are boisterous and the plants are not firmly established. It is a good plan, however, to grow corn in the sort of "hills" that are actually clumps, as corn is wind pollinated and pollen distribution is best where the plants stand in blocks.

All photographs by Green and Hahn.

Meteorological Records for July

Station	Height of station above M.S.L. (ft.)	Air temperatures in degrees (Fahrenheit)				Rainfall in inches					Bright sunshine hours
		Approx. mean	Difference from normal	Absolute maximum and minimum		Total fall	No. of days of rain	Difference from normal	Maximum fall		
				Maximum	Minimum				Amount	Date	
Kerikeri	201	49.7	-0.8	64.6	28.4	3.10	20	-4.29	0.99	16	175
Auckland	160	49.9	-1.5	61.0	36.4	2.94	16	-2.52	0.55	4	168
Tauranga	10	47.6	-1.1	62.3	29.3	7.22	12	+2.18	2.91	17	183
Ruakura	131	44.8	-1.7	61.2	23.7	4.20	14	-0.53	0.92	4	148
Whakarewarewa	1006	43.9	-0.4	57.7	26.9	5.51	13	+0.68	2.07	4	
Gisborne	12	48.0	+0.3	66.1	31.6	7.92	20	+3.51	1.37	4	105
New Plymouth	160	47.6	-1.3	61.0	31.0	4.23	13	-2.13	1.12	3	166
Karioi	2125	39.5	-0.9	57.7	20.9	4.27	13	+0.08	0.71	3	
Napier	5	47.4	+0.1	62.7	32.5	5.32	11	+1.89	1.49	3	147
Wanganui	72	45.2	-2.4	59.4	28.6	4.82	16	+1.90	1.62	3	133
Palmerston North	110	44.2	-1.9	58.8	26.5	2.98	15	-0.06	1.10	3	121
Waingawa	340	43.6	-0.9	59.5	26.5	4.44	22	+0.50	1.64	3	94
Wellington	415	46.0	-0.3	57.3	34.0	3.76	19	-1.60	1.20	3	106
Nelson airfield	5	42.6	-0.7	58.0	24.6	4.22	8	+0.99	1.79	16	162
Blenheim	12	44.0	-0.1	60.5	24.8	2.04	8	-0.57	0.63	17	174
Hokitika	15	43.0	-0.6	57.0	27.1	3.64	11	-4.86	1.12	15	158
Hanmer	1270	37.6	-0.9	61.0	16.0	4.31	11	+0.11	1.61	18	109
Christchurch	22	43.0	+0.7	68.2	23.8	3.86	17	+1.26	0.92	17	129
Ashburton	323	41.6	+0.5	67.8	22.5	3.41	10	+0.79	0.80	4	139
Timaru	56	41.0	-0.4	65.3	24.9	1.21	10	-0.52	0.50	17	151
Alexandra	520	36.6	+0.3	61.2	18.5	0.45	11	-0.21	0.11	15	98
Talari	80	40.0	-1.0	61.9	22.5	2.59	16	+0.65	0.42	4, 26	105
Invercargill airfield	0	40.6	+0.1	57.7	23.6	3.56	16	+0.75	0.63	26	118
Chatham Islands	140	45.5	-0.1	55.4	32.0	3.81	25	+0.23	0.55	27	