

Wally's Weekly News 29th August 2009
Written by Wally Richards.

A NEW SWEET CORN

Susan from Oderings in Christchurch told the writer about a sweet corn that she had grown last season and was very impressed with the resulting crop.

The plants grew normally as you would expect corn to do and then they branched forming multiple stalks with their own tassels and a few cobs on each branch.

This meant that instead of obtaining one to three cobs from each plant as normal expected, a lot more fully formed cobs was obtained.

I took a note of the name of this sweet corn which happens to be a new release called, Sweet Corn, Xtra Tender Gold F.1. Hybrid.

It is also described as "The most revolutionary discovery since xtra-sweets!"

I spoke to the manager of the seed company which distributes this seed to find out how readily available it is through out New Zealand.

It is packaged for Oderings under their own brand and also found in the McGregor and Carnival brand's seed stands, which means you should be able to find the seeds at most garden outlets if you want to grow this sweet corn to try it out.

I was also told that this corn does not produce such a thick skin or shell on each corn seed which means it's more pleasant to eat without so much shell getting stuck in your teeth.

To obtain the full benefit of what this corn can produce you need to space the plants further apart than you would do normally, to allow the branching and to give the branches ample room to form and obtain the sunlight they need.

With normal corn we tend to plant the seeds about 10 to 15cm apart in a double row for pollination.

This new corn should be at least 15cm apart and 20cm or more would likely be better.

As this Sweet Corn, Xtra Tender Gold F.1. Hybrid, has multiple heads and tassels pollination should not be a problem.

When the crop reaches maturity, I like to run my hand up the male tassels on a sunny day (when the pollen is present) and the dump the pollen onto the silks coming out of the immature ears of corn.

This ensures that as many seeds as possible in each ear is pollinated.

Corn is a hungry plant and if you want the best out of this new corn you are going to have to feed it lots. I prefer chook manure for this and will place a good amount of this manure in a hole and then cover it with soil with a seed placed into the top of the soil. This means as your corn plant grows the roots will venture down to a pile of natural heavy duty food. It is also a good idea to place a pile of chook manure into a rubbish tin and fill two thirds full with non-chlorinated water. Stir the contents and repeat stirring occasionally.

The resulting liquid can be taken off and mixed with non chlorinated water, 1to1 and this can be watered onto the soil in the root zone every 1-2 weeks.

Once your corn has germinated spray the foliage and soil with **Magic Botanic Liquid** every 2 weeks.

Corn also requires good amounts of water once they are established and they should be deep watered every few days and lightly watered on the days in-between always using non-chlorinated water.

Otherwise keep an eye out for any insect pests and spray with **Neem Tree Oil** if required.

Some people like to harvest their corn (this should always be done early morning or late afternoon to obtain the most sweetness) and eat the cobs raw.

If you prefer to cook your corn then place the freshly harvested cobs in a hot over for about 10-15 minutes without removing the foliage around the cob. This keeps all the flavour in and wearing a pair of oven gloves remove the sheath foliage. (They are hot) Always pick your corn just before eating, the longer they are off the plant the sugars are turning to starches.

CLEANING BUGS OUT OF THE SOIL BEFORE PLANTING

There are a number of bugs which can be in the soil such as grass grubs, porina, mealy bugs, wire worm and carrot fly, that are waiting for you to plant up your garden. Pests like these can damage and in some cases ruin a crop which makes your efforts a waste of time.

In the past many gardeners used to drench their soil with Jeyes Fluid to knock back insect and disease problems.

Jeyes Fluid is no longer easy to find so if you want to clean up soil problems another product needs to be applied.

There is a chemical solution called Basamid; it is expensive and you need several weeks of time to use correctly. It is a chemical that many may not want in their food crop gardens.

This week while talking to a garden centre owner I came to realise that a natural product called **Professor Mac's 3 in 1 for lawns** would clean up soil insects safely and have the ground ready for planting within a week or two.

Professor Mac's is available in two sizes, a one litre container which you mix with water to apply to 50 square metres and a 2 litre container which you simply snap on the hose and apply to 100 square metres.

The active ingredients are eucalyptus and tea tree oils and these are deadly on insect pests even at the low concentrations which it is used at..

The product is applied at the rate one 1 litre to 25 litres of water to cover 50 square metres of garden (or Lawn)

(Diluted at the above rate; 200mls into 5 litres of water then applied to 10 square metres)

Measure the area which you want to treat to find how many square metres and then mix the Professor Mac with the right amount of water to apply evenly over the square metre area.

Leave for a day and the lightly water to drive the oils deeper. A few days later water again to drive it even deeper. After that your garden should be ready to plant.

Neem Tree Granules can also be applied at planting time to give further protection against any soil insects.

I have had some good reports from gardeners using **Professor Mac's 3 in 1** on lawns to clean up grass grubs or porina and now there is an obvious further use for it in vegetable gardens prior to planting.

Problems ring me at 0800 466464 (Palmerston North 3570606)