

SWEET CORN IN THE COACHELLA VALLEY

GENERAL: Sweet corn is one of the Coachella Valley's million-dollar crops, being produced annually on several thousands of acres.

YIELDS: Yields range from 500 to 1800 dozen marketable ears per acre. Later varieties normally yield higher than the earlier maturing ones, but in past years have commanded lesser price returns per crate than the latter. Sound cultural practices result in greater yields and in return reduce the cost of production per unit.

SOIL REQUIREMENTS: Sweet corn is grown on all types of the Valley's soils from sandy loams to clay loams, with the former being preferred for the early spring crops.

VARIETIES: Golden Cross Bantam strains, especially T-Strain, are the preferred varieties in this area.

PLANTING: About 15 pounds of seed per acre is planted in rows 36 inches apart at a depth of 1 to 1½ inches for early plantings. The seed is planted about halfway between the bottom of the furrow and the top of the ridge by the use of side hill planters in the south sides of beds running east to west. January to March is the period for planting the spring crop, which is harvested from the latter part of April to the middle of June. Later plantings are seeded on the flat with 6 to 10 pounds of seed per acre in rows 36" apart. When plants are 3 to 4 inches high they should be thinned to 8" to 12" between plants.

FERTILIZERS: Nitrogen in the amount of about 160 pounds to the acre is the main fertilizer that must be applied. From 1/2 to 2/3 of this amount may be applied at or before planting time and the remainder when the plants are from 6" to 8" high. Where needed, phosphorus should be applied in amounts of 80 to 100 pounds of phosphoric acid to the acre. Both animal manures and commercial fertilizers have proven to be good sources of required nutrients.

IRRIGATION: Sweet corn, having a shallow root system, requires frequent, but light irrigations. From 18" to 36" acre-inches of water are required, depending on soil type and time of planting. The frequency of irrigations is increased until during harvest time when the period is from 5 to 7 days.

DISEASES AND PEST CONTROL: The occurrence of soil borne diseases of corn are rare in the Coachella Valley, however, seed treatment with Arasan, Sperguson, or Semesan Jr. aids in preventing seed decay.

The corn earworm is the only major insect pest of the crop. When about 20% of the silks have appeared they should be dusted every 3 to 4 days, treating each ear at each dusting, for 3 or 4 applications, using 5% DDT at from 35 to 40 pounds to the acre.

HARVESTING AND PACKING: The crop is hand-picked and the ears are tossed into high-wheel trailers in which they are hauled to the shed. Harvesting should be done as early in the day as possible as this corn is much cooler and will require less cooling than corn harvested after midday. The corn is cooled, either loose or in crates in a water bath of 40° F. or less for from 15 to 20 minutes. Many packers also place crushed ice in the crates containing 4 to 6 dozen ears each, to insure maintenance of quality enroute. Top icing and body icing is also desirable where the load is being transported for 75 miles or more.

AVERAGE PRICE RECEIVED PER CRATE IN CALIFORNIA

1947	1948	1949	1950	1951
2.54	2.59	1.85	2.32	3.06

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WHAT DOES IT COST YOU TO GROW SWEET CORN
IN THE COACHELLA VALLEY?

Big Tractor @ \$2 Per Hour
Small Tractor @ \$1.25 Per Hour

1954

Yield of 200 Crates Per Acre
Labor @ 90¢ Per Hour

ITEMS	SAMPLE COSTS		YOUR COSTS	
	Per Acre	Per Crate	Per Acre	Per Crate
<u>Land Preparation and Planting</u>				
Disc 2x	\$ 4.35		.....	.....
Chisel or harrow 2x	4.35		.....	.....
Disc 2x	4.35		.....	.....
Level 2x.	2.20		.....	.....
Furrow out and shape bed (early crops).	1.65		.....	.....
Pre-irrigate.	1.80		.....	.....
Planting - side hill.	2.15		.....	.....
LAND PREPARATION AND PLANTING TOTAL	\$ 20.85	\$.10	.....	.....
<u>Cultural Labor and Field Power</u>				
Cultivate 3x.	\$ 4.80		.....	.....
Thinning and hoeing 2x.	13.00		.....	.....
Irrigate 15x.	15.00		.....	.....
Fertilizer application.	2.50		.....	.....
Pest control.	20.00		.....	.....
CULTURAL AND FIELD POWER TOTAL.	\$ 55.30	\$.28	.....	.....
<u>Materials</u>				
Irrigation water - 3' A/ft.	\$ 7.50		.....	.....
Fertilizer - 160#N.	24.00		.....	.....
Seed - 15# @ 37¢ per pound.	5.55		.....	.....
Pest control - DDT, 120#/A.	8.40		.....	.....
Crates - 200 @ 35¢ per crate.	70.00		.....	.....
Ice @ 3.5¢ per crate.	7.00		.....	.....
MATERIALS TOTAL	\$122.45	\$.61	.....	.....
<u>Cash Overhead</u>				
General expense @ 5% above.	\$ 14.93		.....	.....
Taxes - 50% to corn	13.50		.....	.....
Insurance	1.50		.....	.....
CASH OVERHEAD TOTAL	\$ 29.93	\$.15	.....	.....
<u>TOTAL CASH COST</u>	\$228.53	\$1.14	.....	.....
Land rent or interest - 50% corn.	\$ 40.00	\$.20	.....	.....
TOTAL COST BEFORE MARKETING	\$268.53	\$1.34	.....	.....
<u>Marketing</u>				
Picked and hauled to shed 12¢/crate	\$ 24.00		.....	.....
Packing, icing, loading - 38¢/crate	76.00		.....	.....
Transportation - truck to Los Angeles	50.00		.....	.....
Selling cost - 15% commission	74.00		.....	.....
MARKETING COSTS TOTAL	\$224.00	\$1.12	.....	.....
TOTAL ALL COSTS	\$492.53	\$2.46	.....	.....