

Baby Corn Becoming A Big Money Crop

Business is booming for baby corn growers. You know - those little ears of corn you find at salad bars and in oriental dishes.

Until recently, nearly all of those tiny ears were grown in Asia, says Carol Miles, an agricultural extension specialist at Washington State University. She's been working with farmers in her state to start filling the growing demand for baby corn.

Miles says there are two ways to produce baby corn. One is to use a variety selected specifically for immature ears. The second method is to plant a multi-eared variety of sweet or field corn and harvest all but the primary ear off the plants, and harvest that later when it matures. That way you get two crops off the same field.

Ears are harvested prior to pollination, usually somewhere between 1 and 3 days after silk emergence. Ears should be 2 to 4 in. long and 1/3 to 2/3 in. across the base of the ear. Kernels should be uniform and aligned in rows.

Miles notes that since the ears are harvested

prior to pollination, the type of corn planted - sweet, field, pop, etc. - doesn't really matter as long as the immature ears are somewhat uniform in size. She recommends varieties like Kandy King, Bodacious, and other sweet corn varieties, as well as a field corn variety called Babycorn, which has been bred specifically for baby corn production.

Since baby corn is hand picked, you need to plant rows far enough apart to walk through comfortably.

Plant at normal corn planting times, using normal corn planting depth. If baby corn is your primary crop, plant at about 44,000 plants per acre, or a seed spacing of about 4 in. If it's only a secondary crop, plant according to the space needs of your primary crop.

Harvest timing can be tricky, and you may need to pick as many as 12 times over a 3 to 4 week period to get ears of a uniform size. A couple days can make a big difference.

For fresh market, baby corn is normally sold with the husks on. The price runs about



Baby corn (left) is much smaller than regular ear corn. It should measure 2 to 4 in. long and 1/3 to 2/3 in. across base of ear.



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\$1.50 a pound in Washington. A baby corn variety will produce about 8,500 lbs. of unhusked ears per acre.

Miles has compiled recipes and other information on producing and marketing baby corn at the Washington State University Extension Website. <http://agsyst.wsu.edu/babycorn98.htm>

[babycorn98.htm](http://agsyst.wsu.edu/babycorn98.htm)

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No-till Opener Designed To Eliminate "Hairpinning"

Brothers Alvin and Rubien Herman were convinced no-till seeding of small grains would be more successful for them if the problem of hairpinning could be solved.

"The Saskatchewan farmers say it causes uneven seeding and emergence. "We farm a lot of leased ground and often end up in a situation where the straw hasn't been properly chopped and spread," says Alvin. "Without further chopping, the openers on the air seeders we'd been using just pushed straw into the soil instead of cutting through it."

The Hermans' opener makes use of wheels on either side of the opener to hold crop residue in place while a single disc slices through it, opening up a clean seed slot.

Once they had a design figured out they made six openers and used them to replace the three openers on each end of the John Deere 1850 seeder they were using.

"We used it to plant part of our crop, and you could see very plainly where those six openers had been," Alvin says.

The Hermans' design was sufficiently different from other openers already on the market that they were able to obtain patents.

They have since licensed their patents to Morris Industries, Saskatoon and further development has been a joint effort.

Murray Just at Morris Industries says the company has built a new toolbar around the Hermans' opener which mates to the company's 7000 series air cart.

After testing the original design on their new toolbar, the company decided to use a parallel linkage, to give it more stability and improve seeding depth. A second independent disk (fertilizer coultter) has been added behind the opener to apply granular fertilizer from a second hopper in the air cart. The fertilizer coultter also provides the choice of applying NH₃ or liquid fertilizer.

Morris Industries says its new no-till seeder will allow growers to save time in field preparation and at planting. "The Hermans have been able to significantly increase their seeding speed with this opener," he says.

Herman says while they no longer need their large horsepower tractors for tillage, they still use them on their air seeders. With the no-pin openers in place, they've been able to plant at speeds of 10 to 12 mph, up from 4



Hermans' opener makes use of wheels on either side of opener to hold crop residue in place while a single disc slices through it, opening up a clean seed slot.

1/2 to 5 mph. "You might think that seeding at that speed would give you a more uneven stand, but we've not seen that," Herman says.

Close to 20,000 acres have already been seeded with the Morris prototype unit, primarily by the Hermans. Morris Industries expects to conduct one more season of tests

with prototypes of the new opener before making it widely available.

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Giant Splitter Handles Stumps And Big Logs

Getting rid of giant waste logs and stumps can be a real problem for construction companies, loggers and others in the forest industry, says Clyde Warren, Murphy, Oregon.

Unless they're split, the biggest chunks don't burn well. Trouble was, Warren couldn't find a splitter big enough to do the job.

It took five years, countless hours and thousands of dollars, but Warren built a splitter that'll handle stumps up to 10 ft. in diameter. It'll also split 6-ft. dia. logs up to 6 ft. long.

The big splitter is so large it takes a lowbed heavy equipment trailer to haul it. The splitting wedge was cut from 1-in. plate steel and weighs about a ton. "It rolls on four steel rollers and is pushed into the stumps or logs by a 10-in. diameter hydraulic cylinder with a 4 3/8-in. shaft and an 8-ft. stroke."

The cylinder develops more than 90 tons

of pressure, so it could split a lot more than just tree stumps.

The splitter is powered by a 6-cyl. 350 cu. in. Cummins diesel. The engine and fuel tank mount on the lowbed trailer with the splitter.

To load stumps and logs into the splitter, he mounted a log crane on the splitter trailer, too.

Separate hydraulic pumps on the engine power the splitter and log handler. To make sure he has plenty of hydraulic fluid for both, he mounted a 200-gal. reservoir on the trailer.

Warren can split about eight stumps an hour, depending on size. "Logs are easier to split, so we can do more of those," he notes.

With everything in place, the splitter and trailer weigh about 20 tons. Warren says while it is heavy, it's still under highway load and size limits, so he needs no special highway permits for it.

Warren charges \$100 an hour for splitting jobs. He'll go anywhere along the West Coast.



Splitter handles stumps up to 10 ft. in diameter and will split 6-ft. dia. logs up to 6 ft. long. The big splitter is so large it takes a lowbed heavy equipment trailer to haul it.

"We just finished splitting stumps for a landfill in Watsonville, California," he says. Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Clyde

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