

Seed Breeder Develops New Synthetic Corn Variety

For more than 20 years Glenn Page has been cross breeding and selecting lines of open-pollinated corn for early maturity, standability and yield. He recently released a new line for commercial sales, and has several other lines nearly ready for full production.

"This variety of corn cuts drying costs, yields well on marginal ground, and slashes seed costs," says Page. "I have two 85-day or less varieties, a 90-day or more variety, and two early 85-day mid rib varieties," says Page. "They're easily capable of 150 bushel per acre yields and have excellent standability."

Early maturity and small tassel are two key traits of Page's corn lines. The early maturity utilizes light during the longest days of the season for maximum growth. Early pollen and silk production reduces the potential for yield-limiting plant stress from midsummer heat and drought. The early maturity also reduces drying costs.

"Traditional open-pollinated corn had very large tassels producing over 200 pounds of pollen per acre in mid to late July when plant stress is greatest. In addition to the photosynthetic cost of producing all that pollen, the large tassels also shaded the plant."

Page's smaller tassel and stalk require less energy from photosynthesis, and the smaller tassels reduce shading. Each stalk produces an ear, but the smaller stalks often mean smaller ears. To compensate for the reduced ear size and to make full use of available light, Page advocates higher populations. He selects his seed stock from his BMR nursery



Photo shows a field of BMR corn grown for silage in 2010. You can see the brown midrib on the leaves. Page will soon release 3 more varieties of OP corn.

populations for the last few years have been over 70,000 plants per acre.

In addition to planting on marginal and droughty soils, Page believes his early BMR variety would be ideal for use in deer and wildlife plots. "In a wildlife plot, you don't want corn that is too high, and you don't need 200 bushel yields," he says. "It's less expensive, and the early maturity is ideal for feeding wildlife in the fall."

The new variety Page recently released is called "Brown MidRib", or BMR84. The variety is not recommended for grain production as the yields are lower than conventional varieties and it does not stand as well, due to the low lignin levels. But it does stand up well enough for silage corn and, since it's low in lignin, universities report a 5 lb. milk increase with BMR silage. BMR matures early at 84 days. Page recommends planting at populations as high

as 70,000 plants per acre in narrow rows. When planted that last summer in Idaho, it produced 23 tons of silage per acre.

Page says BMR corn has an even greater potential for grazing as a very high quality summer annual to fill in during the time when summer grass production declines. It can be seeded with a drill in late spring or early summer, and needs no herbicide.

BMR seed is available from Geertson Seed (ph 800 843-0390) or Ray Brothers Seed (ph 800 657-1060).

Page has three other OP varieties that he plans to release soon. He's looking for farmer breeders to help develop future varieties.

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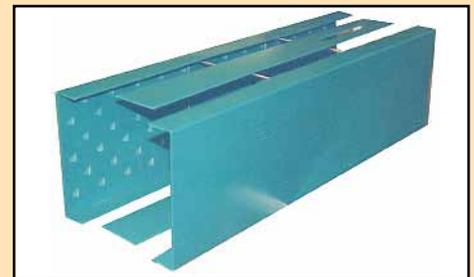
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