SWEET CORN TYPES

What's the difference? Watch for the following to the right of each variety name: (su), (se), (se+), (sh2) and synergistic.

1. ''Normal Sugary'' (su). Kernels contain moderate but varying degrees of sugar, depending on the variety. Sugars convert to starch rapidly after harvest. Traditional corn flavor.

2. ''Sugary Enhanced'' (se) and (se+). This gene, when present, modifies the normal sugary (su) gene. The result is much increased tenderness and, to a varying degree, sweetness. The conversion of sugar to starch after harvest is slowed. No isolation from "Normal'' (su) sweet corn is necessary when planting an (se). More specifically: (se) varieties are hybrids between an (se) parent and an (su) parent, technically "heterozygous se" or "1/4 sugary enhanced'' for increased tenderness and sweetness; (se+) varieties are hybrids between two (se) parents, hence "homozygous se" or "fully sugary enhanced,'' and very tender and sweet.

3. "Synergistic". Synergistic ears are comprised of 75% (se) kernels and 25% (sh2) kernels. Generally, synergistics combine the tenderness of (se)'s and the increased sugar content of Super Sweets. For best eating quality the ears must be allowed to fully mature as the sugars develop later than in (se)'s. Ears picked too early will be "watery." They can be grown with other synergistics, (se)'s and (su)'s. Cross pollination with a Super Sweet will result in tough, starchy kernels in both types.

4. ''Shrunken'' (sh2). This gene's name is descriptive of its effect on the appearance of the dry kernel. Its presence creates greatly heightened sweetness and slow conversion to starch after harvest. Common name for this type is "Super Sweet." Cross pollination between a Super Sweet and a "Normal'', "Sugary Enhanced'' or "Synergistic" variety will result in tough, starchy kernels in both types.

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