FIELD CORN

Because of its high protein and carbohydrate content, corn has been an important nutritional resource for thousands of years. Corn can be traced back to Mexican or central American cultures as early as 3400 B.C., and has become a staple among Native American civilizations throughout the Western Hemisphere. The corn plant is a North American native. It was first grown in Mexico 7,000 years ago. The native Indians first taught the pilgrims to use corn.

Currently, field corn is a rather minor crop in Yuma County. In 2005, local corn producers grew roughly 300 acres of corn valued at $200,000.

Field corn is also used to make whiskey, and a wide variety of industrial products such as ceramics, pharmaceutical drugs such as penicillin and other antibiotics, paints, crayons, shoe polish, wall paper, paper goods, textiles, batteries, fireworks, cardboard, biodegradable packaging materials and much more. Corn can be processed into a fuel called ethanol. More than a thousand modern items are made from corn.

The United States grows more corn than any other country and is known as “maize” in many parts of the world.

Corn is in touch with us daily - often without our ever knowing it. Americans would find it difficult to live without corn. It is our country’s number one crop. Many people are familiar with sweet corn and enjoy it as a part of their diets.

Approximately 50 percent of the U.S. corn crop is fed to livestock (hogs, cattle, sheep and poultry). Corn is the leading source of sweetener and is used to make a wide variety of foods such as bread, breakfast cereal, corn meal, corn syrup, corn oil, corn starch, sodas, candy and chewing gum.

Different corn plants have different numbers of ears, but much of the field corn grown in Yuma is bred to develop just one large ear rather than several incomplete ears. This approach usually yields better total production.

The number of kernels per ear can vary from 500 to about 1,200, but a typical ear would have 800 kernels, according to corn experts.

A typical corn plant can be anywhere from 5 feet to 12 feet tall. Under good growing conditions, plants are commonly about 8 feet tall by midsummer. A healthy corn plant’s root system will reach about 6-1/2 feet into the ground!

The silks on corn are essential for pollen from the tassels to fertilize the plant. Each silk will convey pollen to one site on a developing ear of corn, making it possible for that site to develop into a kernel of corn. If it’s too hot, the silks can dry out before all the sites on a corn cob are fertilized. As a result, there will be gaps on that ear of corn where no kernels developed because they weren’t fertilized.

Most of Yuma’s corn crop goes into animal feed. In livestock feeding, one bushel of corn converts to about 5.6 pounds of retail beef, 13 pounds of retail pork, 28 pounds of catfish, or 32 pounds of chicken. Iowa’s corn is also processed into starches, oil, sweeteners, and ethanol.
Many ethanol plants now produce 2.7 gallons of ethanol and about 18 pounds of animal feed from each bushel of corn.

The next time you go shopping for groceries, become a corn detective. Just how many items can you identify that contain corn or a corn by-product? The number will amaze you!

Did you know that the main ingredient in most dry pet food is corn? Corn helps keep our dogs and cats healthy and active.

Corn has long been recognized as a good source of nutrition for humans. Corn provides protein and fiber that are both essential elements in our diet.

Corn is descended from a plant called teosinte, which still grows in Mexico, and the first corn plants seem to have appeared in Mexico. The earliest known ears of corn were tiny - only a few inches long. Centuries of breeding, first by American Indians, then by early settlers and modern scientists, have resulted in bigger, fuller ears of corn and made corn one of the world's three leading grain crops.

Most varieties of corn require 100 to 140 days from seeding to full ripeness of the kernels though some kinds will ripen in as little as 80 days.

Corn is in the bamboo family. That's pretty much a no-brainer if you've ever looked at a corn stalk.

About all of the corn you see in Yuma fields is field corn. It tastes very bland and isn't the same stuff you buy at the store.

Corn is produced on every continent of the world except Antarctica. During warm June nights in Yuma, you'll swear you can hear corn growing. It's pretty easy to get lost in a cornfield and if it's hot enough it can be fatal too. Contrary to their name, Corn Snakes are not made out of corn.

The corn used for ethanol production is field corn, typically used to feed livestock, not the sweet corn marketed for human consumption.

In the U.S. and most other developed countries where corn is grown, farmers today grow hybrid corn almost exclusively. Hybrid corn is developed through breeding to have exceptional vigor and produce high yields.

The corn plant is one of nature's most amazing energy-storing devices. From a seed that weighs little more than one-hundredth of an ounce, a plant 7 to 10 feet tall develops in about nine weeks. In the following two months, this plant produces 600 to 1,000 seeds similar to the one from which it started.

Most types of corn will not germinate or germination is very slow at temperatures less than 60°F. The longer germination takes the more susceptible the seed and seedling will be to soil-borne diseases. By the time the soil has warmed to 60°F, germination is prompt and the seedling will be above ground in about a week after planting.

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