



CHARLIE BAIER, Iowa State University Howard County Extension Education Director

FOR THE WEEK OF July 25, 2005

Harvest Sweet Corn

Harvest sweet corn when the silks are brown and dry at the ear tip and the kernels are in the milk stage. The soft kernels produce a milky juice when punctured with a thumbnail. Over-mature sweet corn is tough and doughy. An immature ear will not be completely filled to the tip and the kernels produce a clear, watery liquid when punctured.

The harvest date can be estimated by noting the date of silk emergence. The number of days from silk emergence to harvest is about 18 to 23 days. Prime maturity, however, may be reached in 15 days or less during hot weather. Most hybrid sweet corn varieties produce two ears per plant. The upper ear usually matures one or two days before the lower ear. As the sweet corn approaches maturity, check it frequently. Sweet corn remains in prime condition for only one or two days during hot (85 degrees Fahrenheit and above) weather.

Harvest sweet corn by grasping the ear at its base and then twisting downward. Use or refrigerate sweet corn immediately. Standard sweet corn varieties may lose 50% of their sugar within 12 hours of harvest if not refrigerated. Sweet corn can be stored in the refrigerator at 32 degrees Fahrenheit for 4 to 8 days. High sugar varieties are slower to convert sugar to starch and may be harvested over a longer period. They also have a longer storage life.

Wild Parsnip -- a Weed to Watch

by Kristine Schaefer, Department of Agronomy

Conditions have been especially favorable this year for wild parsnip, *Pastinaca sativa*, a common roadside weed in Iowa. Wild parsnip poses a health hazard that many people may not be aware of.

Wild parsnip is found in open places such as roadsides, pastures, and disturbed areas. It can be found throughout most of the United States and Canada and produces a large amount of seed, which contributes to its persistence and spread.

The basal rosette of wild parsnip consists of large, pinnately compound leaves that resemble celery leaves. Leaves that develop on the stem the second year (or subsequent growth season) are alternate, pinnately compound, and branched with serrated or saw-toothed edges. Each leaf has 5 to 15 leaflets. The lower leaves have petioles (leaf stalks) while the upper leaves are sessile (no leaf stalks; attached directly to the stem). Upper leaves are progressively smaller than the lower leaves. The stem is hollow and grooved, 2 to 5 feet in height. The flowers are small, predominantly yellow (occasionally white), and 5-petaled, arranged in an umbel (resembles an upside down umbrella). The umbel ranges from 2 to 6 inches across and sits at the top of slender stems. The primary flowering period for wild parsnip in Iowa is from May through July. Wild parsnip reproduces by seed.

Special Warning!!!

Wild parsnip plant parts contain a substance called psoralen which can cause a condition known as "phytophotodermatitis". This reaction occurs when plant juice gets on the skin and then the skin is exposed to sunlight. The results are skin reddening, rash development and in severe cases, blisters, skin discoloration, and burning or scalding type pain. Wild parsnip burns often occur in elongated spots or streaks. Dark red or brownish skin discoloration develops where the burn or blisters first appeared and can last for several months, possibly up to two years. Extra care should be taken to wear protective clothing before working with or exposure to wild parsnip.

For more information and to see a picture of this plant go to <http://www.ipm.iastate.edu/ipm/hortnews/>

Great Information

Howard County Extension has a wonderful web site that is just packed full of information. It is well worth the time to visit the site at www.extension.iastate.edu/Howard and learn the latest information from Iowa State University.