

2014 CITY OF VIRGINIA BEACH AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT FACT SHEET

Corn



EARLY RECORDS INDICATE THAT IN 1879 THERE WERE MORE THAN 28,500 ACRES OF CORN IN OLD PRINCESS ANNE COUNTY. PEAK ACREAGE WAS REACHED IN 1909 WITH 34,192 ACRES AND THEREAFTER SLOWLY DECLINED TO 15,500 ACRES IN 1939.



Corn has a long history in Virginia Beach

Indians were growing corn when the first English Settlers built homes on the shores of the Lynnhaven River. For more than 300 years, it was the most important crop in Virginia Beach.

By 1939, corn hybrids were in the early stage of development and along with fertilizer and improved crop production, corn yields began to slowly increase, while the demand for feeding draft ani-

mals began to fall rapidly with farms transitioning to tractors, trucks and other motorized equipment. Corn acreage was converted to high value vegetable and fruit crops that were sold farm income



Popcorn is a novelty crop grown on a small scale. It differs from other corn because its starch/moisture ratio and tight shell allows moisture to turn to steam, thus popping the kernel to form the popular snack food.

Key Virginia Beach Corn Facts

- In 2013 corn yields in Virginia Beach averaged 185 bushels per acre. These yields were nearly 8 times greater than the national average of 24 bushels per acre in 1931.
- In 2012, the US produced the largest corn crop (95.9 million acres) since 1937 when 97.2 million acres of corn were planted
- The quality and nutrient value of the crop is far superior now than compared to earlier years.
- Today's farmer needs thousands of acres to pay for \$110,000 planters, \$150,000 tractors and \$400,000 combines. Thousands of bushels of grain are needed to pay the cost of field tillage equipment, trucks, spray rigs, grain dryers and grain storage bins needed to operate a successful grain production farm.
- Based on a \$600 average cost to plant 1 acre of corn; a 1000 acres of corn would require a \$600,000 investment in the corn crop.
- Rainfall is the number one factor controlling corn yields in Virginia Beach.
- Virginia Beach experienced a mild July-August 2010 drought resulting in 140 bushels per acre yield average compared to 185 bushels per acre in 2013. *(Continued on back)*

While there are hundreds of species of corn, only two types exist: sweet and field

Sweet Corn

Sweet corn is mainly used for eating fresh off the cob, canned or frozen corn. It gets its name because it is higher in natural sugars than other corns.

Field Corn

Field corn, also called dent corn, serves mainly as feed for livestock. It is also used to make ethanol, and for other industrial uses. Since Indian corn and popcorn are harvested at maturity they fall into the field corn category. Indian corn is mostly grown for its ornamental value and popcorn for human consumption.



Harvesting

Because sweet corn is bred for its sweetness and tenderness, it is harvested when it is immature, and the kernels are full of sugar. Field corn is bred for its starch content since it is meant for animal feed; therefore it is harvested when the kernels are hard and largely dry, according to Extension.org.



Key Virginia Beach Corn Facts Continued.....

- In 2013 Virginia Beach had 5,750 acres of land in corn production.
- Corn planting in Virginia Beach normally begins in April and is usually completed by mid-May.
- Early July is a critical time for determining corn yields. Pollination occurs during this time so soil moisture and daytime temperatures are critical during these few weeks.
- Harvest begins in late August and is generally finished by early October.
- One acre of corn removes 8 tons of harmful greenhouse gas, exceeding the amount produced by one automobile in a year according to EPA.
- Nationally, farmers producing corn have reduced soil erosion by 44% through utilization of conservation tillage practices.
- Sweet corn is harvested daily from late June to mid-September and sold at local farm markets.
- The 2013 corn crop in Virginia each had an estimated economic impact of \$5.4 Million (The average price per bushel in 2013 was \$5.10 and the average yield was 185 bushels per acre.)
- Corn, one of the most popular and versatile vegetables, is made up of four major components: starch, fiber, protein and oil. Corn is a low-fat complex carbohydrate that deserves a regular place on any healthy table.
- The average ear of corn has 800 kernels. One pound of corn consists of approximately 1300 kernels.
- Corn is produced in every continent of the world with the exception of Antarctica.