

A-maize-ing Corn



WHAT IS A VEGETABLE, a grain, and a fruit all at the same time? Corn! Another word for corn is maize. In the fall, some farmers use their corn fields to create fun mazes for families to explore. A-maize-ing!

Where Did Corn Come From?

Corn was first planted and harvested in Mexico and in Central America thousands of years ago. Native Americans taught English settlers how to grow corn in North America. Maize is a Native word meaning "sacred mother" or "giver of life."

Parts of a Corn Plant

If you've seen fields of cornstalks waving in the summer breeze, you probably won't be surprised to learn that corn is part of the grass family. The ears of corn, called cobs, grow on long stalks. Inside each ear of corn are hundreds of seeds called kernels. Did you know that most corn stalks can grow up to 15 feet tall?

Each corn stalk grows from a single kernel that is planted in the ground and grows into grass-like sprouts. Then a thick stalk with lots of leaves forms. At the top of the stalk is the tassel. This is the part of the corn plant that contains the pollen. The wind blows the pollen to other corn plants.

What Is Corn Used For?

Corn is used for food. Think about all the times you enjoyed sweet, juicy corn on the cob for dinner last summer or shared a tub of buttered popcorn while watching your favorite movie. People also use corn to make cereal, cornbread, and lots of other delicious foods.

Corn is used as fuel for cars. Ethanol is a special fuel made from corn that can power some kinds of cars.

Corn is used in making many other non-food items too, including fireworks, glue, paint, dyes, laundry detergent, soap, aspirin, paint, shoe polish, ink, and cosmetics.

Corn is used to make food containers, packages, and dishes. Unlike regular plastic containers and spoons, corn-based products are biodegradable.



Did You Know?

- » Corn is grown on every continent of the world except Antarctica.
- » Some ears of corn have more than 800 kernels.
- » A corn cob will always have an even number of rows of kernels.
- » Corn comes in lots of different colors. Yellow is the most most common color, but it also comes in black, dark blue, purple, green, red, and white.
- » One bushel of corn can sweeten 400 cans of soda.
- » Corn grows its male and female flowers on the same plant. The male flower of a corn plant is called the tassel, while the ear with its corn silk is the female flower. **B**



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