SAVE YOUR OWN SEED CORN
SELECT IN THE FIELD BEFORE FROST

By WALDO KIDDER, Extension Agronomist
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Corn is grown on more farms in Colorado than any other crop. Still there is very little work being done to improve the yields or the quality of seed produced. Last year the average yield for the State was only 16 1/2 bushels per acre on over a million acres grown. But in every community there are good corn growers who are doubling this yield, and yields of 40 bushels per acre on dry land or 80 to 100 bushels on irrigated land are reported each year. One of the best ways of improving a corn yield is by planting better seed.

Seed corn is usually scarce in the spring about the time the farmer wants to plant. If he does not secure his seed before spring he takes what is available and in most instances it has been shipped in from some distant community, is field-run seed, shelled and graded, and in general has had little or no work done with it to make it produce better. No wonder poor results follow.

Corn is naturally a warm-weather plant and so will produce better in the warmer regions than in Colorado. It is, however, quite adaptable, and by constant selection it is possible to get good-yielding corn that will mature year after year under the conditions to which it is subjected in Colorado. Colorado has a number of conditions which will change the growth habits of the crop, such as altitude, amount of rainfall, etc. If corn is to do well in a community it should be acclimated to that community and selected to meet the requirements imposed upon it by these climatic conditions. Unless the community boasts of a grower of registered seed corn, the thing for each farmer to do is to select seed from his own field for his own use.

Since it takes but a very small amount of seed to plant an acre, and because this seed has such an influence in determin-
ing the yield and maturity of the crop, selection of the best seed possible becomes one of the best-paying pieces of work on the farm.

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The time to select this seed is just before frost, when the ears are well matured and the stalks and leaves are still green. It takes a bushel of seed to plant from 8 to 12 acres and it will take from 80 to 135 ears to make a bushel. In gathering the seed the farmer should get plenty, two or three times as much as he will need. Even so, the field selection of seed is not going to be such a big job.

Plan to select your seed in the field this fall.

The following points are given to follow in field selection of seed:

1. Gather plenty of seed in the field before frost.
2. Take seed from healthy, medium-sized stalks which are still green and leafy and which are growing under average field conditions. Stalks should be standing upright, having no suckers or tillers and have one good ear on each stalk.
3. From these good stalks select medium- to fair-sized ears which are well matured and which are covered clear over the end with the husk.
4. The ear should be attached to the stalk with a medium-length shank of medium thickness. With this sort of a shank and a good ear, the ear will no doubt hang over a little. The ear should break from the shank with only a medium amount of effort and break clean.
5. Ears selected should be of fair length and circumference but not of the short, thick, big-cob type. In dent varieties, kernels should be of medium depth and have a smooth dent. The space between rows of kernels should not be too open nor yet too tight.
When seed has been selected considering the above points, the resulting crop will be similar to the plants from which seed has been taken, so will mature early and yield well. By field selection, as in no other way, is the type of plant and maturity known. So field selection should be practiced by all corn growers.

When seed has been selected in the field before frost, the ears will contain a large amount of moisture, and if subjected to severe cold weather before the ear dries out, germination will be destroyed. The best way to handle the seed is to take the ears that have been selected to the barn or granary and store them so they will dry out as quickly as possible and not be subjected to severe cold weather. The best method of storing this seed will be so that each ear has free circulation of air around it. This may be done by tying with string or twine on lath racks or by a number of other methods.

In the winter after the corn is thoroughly dried out and the farmer has more time, he should re-sort his field-selected seed. The best seed he should save for his own planting. This should be butted, and tipped and shelled by hand. This seed will be used to plant next spring. The second best seed should be saved for re-planting or for a seed stock for the following year, providing against a possible loss of seed each year.

Various Methods of Storing Seed Corn. All Good Methods Permit the Ear to Be Kept in a Warm Room and So the Ear Can Dry Quickly.