



## Planting small seed, Part 1: Agronomics

### Overview

Hybrid seed corn comes in many shapes, sizes and weights based on ear formation. This four-part series addresses special considerations for maximizing yield when planting small corn seed.

### What you should know

- **Corn seed sizes vary by location on the ear:** Large, round seed comes from the butt of the ear; flat seed comes from the middle of the ear; small, round seed comes from the ear tip; and medium, round seed can come from either end of the ear.
- **Silking influences seed size:** Under favorable conditions, pollen drop lasts five to eight days. Silk emergence begins slightly before or after pollen drop, depending on temperature and available moisture. Silks are receptive to pollen for about seven days. The silks from the butt of the ear are the first to emerge and become pollinated, followed by silks from the mid-ear. Because the tip silks emerge last, they are pollinated last and are smaller than other kernels.
- **Seed size doesn't affect yield:** Beginning as early as 1937, researchers have compared yields from varying seed sizes. Research has found seeds of various sizes from the same genetics have comparable yield potential and quality.
- **Small seed has advantages:** Smaller seeds require less moisture for germination, which can be helpful under dry conditions.
- **Small seed is subject to stress:** Small corn seed has a limited energy reserve to manage stress compared with large seed. Under stress, kernels at the tip may not be pollinated at all or aborted. Small seed must be carefully managed under stressful conditions to reach its full potential.



Corn seed size varies depending on where it formed on the ear, with larger seeds at the base and smaller seeds toward the tip.



### 30-Second Summary

- Seed size varies naturally across the ear.
- Small seed corn can yield just as well as larger seeds.
- Small seed may be an advantage in dry conditions.
- Small seed is more susceptible to stress, so should be carefully managed in stressful conditions.

### NOTES:

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