



The Mavis Institute

The crossroads between Nature & Technology.

The Three Sisters method for planting begins with building an elevated mound that is three feet across and roughly a foot high. This mound aids in soil drainage, which contributes to avoiding root rot. First, plant your corn in the center of the mound. Six or seven corn seeds placed in the center of each mound will suffice. Once they have sprouted, thin to just four for maximum growth potential. Two weeks after the corn sprouts, you can plant six to seven bean seeds in a circle surrounding the corn about six inches away from the corn. When these sprout, also thin them to just four.

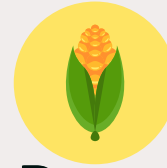
Lastly, at the same time as you plant the beans, also plant the squash seeds. Plant two squash seeds and thin to one when they sprout. The squash will grow around the base, while the beans will grow up the corn.

It is important to note that these plants are not cold tolerant, so we recommend waiting until after the last frost before beginning your Three Sisters Garden. The optimal time to plant is very late Spring into early Summer (late May/early June). With this timing, you can expect to harvest your Three Sisters into Fall simultaneously for combined use in your cooking.

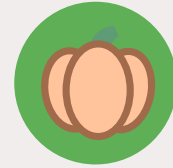


Three Sisters

Corn



Squash



Beans



Sunflower

Wampanoag Method Instructions

- Choose a spot that has at least 6 hours per day of direct sunlight.
- Soil should be rich in organic matter and free of stones and weeds.
- Build each mound so that it is 4" tall, and 18" diameter at the base, with a flat top that is about 10" across, see Figure 1.
- Space mounds so their centers are 4' apart.
- You can plant your garden as soon as the night temperatures are consistently above 55°F, and not later than June 1.
- Plant the corn on the flat part at 6" spacing, see Figure 2.
- On every other mound, alternate with squash instead of corn, planting squash in a triangle pattern at 4" spacing.
- If including sunflowers or bee balm, plant those on the north side of the garden.
- Once the corn is at least 4" tall, plant the beans around the slopes of each corn mound. Planting the beans a few weeks after the corn ensures that the corn stalks will be strong enough to support the fast growing beans.

Figure 1: Circular Wampanoag Garden

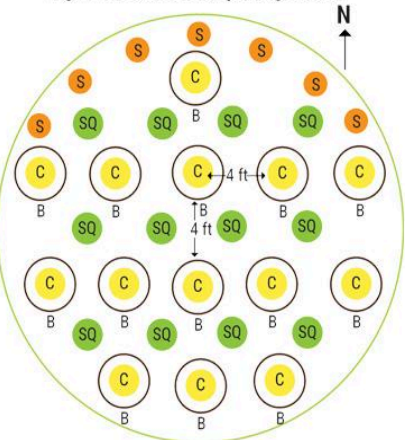
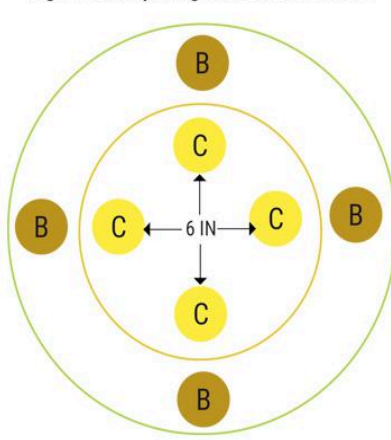


Figure 2: Wampanoag Corn and Bean Mound



Sometimes a fourth sister is included: either Sunflower or Bee Balm. This sister also supports the beans, lures birds away from the corn with their seeds and attracts insect pollinators.



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