



*Seeds for Africa*

## Broom Corn

Till the soil in an area that receives full sun. Work to break up the soil in one direction, then turn to work the ground at right angles to the original direction. Spread a layer of compost or manure, and work it into the soil on the final round of tilling. Exact amounts are not important; just work in generous amounts.

Plant seeds two weeks after the final frost, when the ground temperature reaches around 60 to 65 degrees Fahrenheit (between May 1 and June 15, depending on your location). Use a hoe to create a furrow; bury each broom corn seed 1 inch deep and 3 inches apart (in drier locations, 6 to 9 inches apart). Make block-like rows 36 to 40 inches apart, instead of one long row, for best pollination.

**Water broom corn frequently:** Poke your finger an inch or two into the soil; if it feels dry, it needs moisture. Soak the soil to a depth of about 5 or 6 inches, then wait until it is dry again before repeating. Broom corn does best in moist but well-drained soil, so avoid constant watering.

Weed your broom corn as needed. Large plants can compete with weeds, but seedlings are vulnerable to being choked out. Remove any diseased or dead plants from your broom corn as you weed to avoid the spread of disease.

Harvest broom corn when the entire bush changes from pale yellow to light green. Harvesting too soon will result in weak fibers. Collect broom corn before it turns a reddish color to avoid less flexible broom corn. The ideal time to harvest is about 15 weeks; as little as 4 to 5 days' delay can result in red broom corn.

Hang broom corn brush upside-down to dry. After a few weeks, it is ready to use for crafts.

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