

# Sorghum Growing Guide

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*Sorghum bicolor*

**Classification and Historical Notes:** Sorghum originated in Africa, where it has been cultivated since 2,200 B.C. Though sorghum may have been grown in the U.S. as early as 1700, the first recorded introduction was by William R. Prince of Flushing, NY in 1853. By 1859 it was grown in 32 states. There are four main classes of sorghum and many cultivars: (1) cane sorghum with sweet stalks used for making syrup, (2) grain sorghum used for feed or for making flour or cereal, (3) broom corns, and (4) grass sorghum used for pasturing. Sorghum has excellent resistance to drought due to its extensive root system. It is a valuable crop in dry areas since it will produce grain where corn may fail.

**How to Grow:** Sorghum is planted in the same fashion as corn, with similar spacing. (See corn section.) Sow seeds 1/2-3/4 in. deep.

**Seed Harvest:** Seed is mature for harvest when the seed stalk has started to dry. Cut the stalk, allow to dry further under cover, strip the seeds by hand, and winnow to clean. Grain sorghum can be used like flour corn. It is especially good for making pancake flour.

**Syrup Harvest:** In the fall, strip the leaves, and after cutting the cane into convenient lengths, crush the cane and press out the juice into a pot. Cook to reduce the liquid until it reaches the consistency of maple syrup. The sweet canes of cane sorghum can be peeled and chewed like candy—we like to plant a small patch for snacking.

**Seed Savers:** Isolate 1/2 mile from other sorghum, broom corn, grass and sudan grass.