



Southern Exposure Seed Exchange

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Item #92001 Certified Organic seed

Three Sisters Garden Package

Native Americans have been companion planting the Three Sisters (squash, corn, and pole beans) for thousands of years. A well-maintained Three Sisters garden is both beautiful and productive.

The corn provides a tall stalk for the beans to climb. The transpiration from the corn leaves provides mild cooling for the beans. The beans, in turn, have the amazing ability to fix nitrogen from the atmosphere, which helps to offset corn's heavy nitrogen demands. (Note, however, that the nitrogen the bean fixes will not be directly available for this year's corn crop, and so corn should still get as much compost or other fertilizer as usual.) The squash serves to provide a living mulch, suppressing weeds and keeping the hot summer sun from baking the earth dry.

In addition to being a functional, productive system, a Three Sisters garden is beautiful. The circular yet directional pattern provides a calming space to work in. The bean flowers draping from the corn leaves seem to dance over the large squash leaves. The squash and bean flowers are heavily visited by pollinating insects.

The seeds provided in this package are selected to work well in a Three Sisters garden. While many variations on the Three Sisters are possible, that the corn used should be a tall, sturdy variety - i.e., not popcorn, as popcorn stalks are too short to support for long any high-climbing pole beans; and most sweet corns will also be too short. For more details on Three Sisters possibilities and variations see Carol Deppe's excellent book *The Resilient Gardener*.

Layout

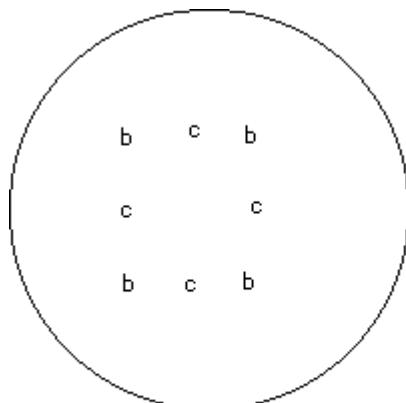
See reverse for a layout example. By the time the soil has warmed up and nighttime low temperatures have reached the 60°, mark a 25-foot diameter circle in an area that has been dug or tilled. You can do this by staking a 12-1/2 foot rope to the center and walking the perimeter using the stretched rope as a guide. As you walk, your footprints will mark the outside of the circle.

Planting in mounds is a widespread tradition in Native American agriculture. When using this layout, make mounds for the corn and bean plants 5 feet apart, 5 inches high and 18 inches across, with flattened tops. Separate the mounds from one another by five feet. Rows of mounts should also be five feet from one another. Place four corn seeds in each mound in a 6 inch square.

When the corn is 4 inches tall, place four bean seeds in each mound. Plant the bean seeds 3 inches beyond the corn plants, completing out the square shape as shown left.

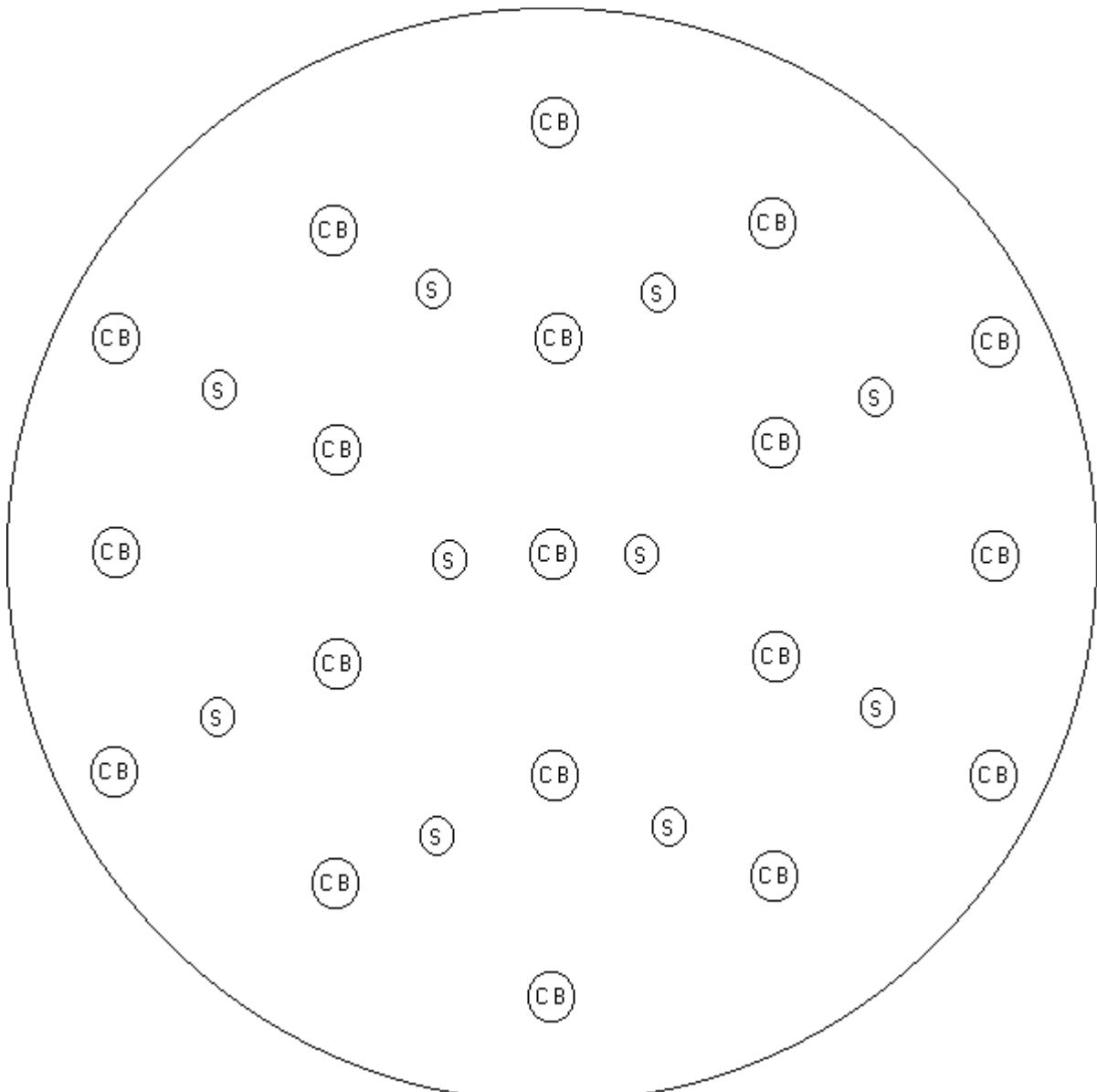
When the bean plants have sprouted, hoe the entire patch and build squash mounds. They should be the same size as the bean and corn mounds. Plant 3 seeds per mound. As the squash emerges, thin them to 1-2 plants per hill. Generally, thin to 2 plants per hill for most squash varieties, or 1 plant per hill for varieties with more vigorous and sprawling vines, such as Seminole pumpkin!

After the squash plants have shown their first true leaves, hoe the plot again if necessary.



— 18 Inches —

NORTH



Garden Map