

Native American Corn Garden Provides Answers

The Situation

Gardeners on the Nez Perce Reservation are seeking methods of producing sweet corn without the use of commercial nitrogen fertilizer.

Our Response

We worked cooperatively with the United States Department of Agriculture Nez Perce Tribal Food Bank to establish a community garden in Lapwai, Idaho.

Rapeseed, beans, peas, and oats were planted in the fall at the garden site then plowed under in the spring before planting corn. The decomposition of these crops returns organic nitrogen to the soil.

Our Goals

- ? ? To compare sweet corn yields when grown following the soil-incorporation of rapeseed, beans, peas, and oats.
- ? ? To provide education about gardening and sweet corn production.
- ? ? To provide fresh sweet corn to the USDA/ Nez Perce Tribal Food Bank.

Achievements

- ? ? Tribal members observed that soil-incorporation of rapeseed, beans, peas, or oats can replace the use of commercial nitrogen fertilizer.
- ? ? Sweet corn was produced satisfactorily without the use of commercial nitrogen fertilizer.
- ? ? Integrated pest management principles were demonstrated.
- ? ? Educational garden tours were provided.
- ? ? Fresh sweet corn was provided for the food bank (serving 280 people monthly).
- ? ? Best yields were achieved when sweet corn was planted following soil-incorporated rapeseed.

Cooperators

Nez Perce Tribal Food Bank
UI/Nez Perce County Master Gardeners

For More Information

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