



Cornell University  
Cooperative Extension  
Franklin County



## Three Sisters Gardening

1. In late May or early June (as soon as the ground is safely and easily workable), till and mound up an area approximately 4'x4' for each mound you will be growing. If you wish to grow two mounds, the area would be 4'x8'; 3 mounds would be 4'x12' etc. The centers of your mounds should be at least four feet apart and should be flattened at the top.
2. In the center of each mound, plant five or six corn kernels in a small circle. Select varieties that grow tall.
3. Once the corn has grown to be 6 to 12 inches tall, plant four to eight pole beans in a circle 6 inches or so away from the corn plants. Plant hearty climbers.
4. As soon as you are sure that the beans are growing, plant eight squash or pumpkin seeds at the edge of the mound away from the beans.
5. As the plants grow, you will need to select the sturdiest of the corn plants from each mound and thin out the rest.
6. Soon after, you will have to do the same for the beans and then the squash plants.
7. As the corn and beans grow, you want to make sure that the beans are supported by the cornstalks, wrapping around climbing upon the corn plants. The squash will fill around the corn and beans and the areas between the mounds, if you have planted more than one mound.

Success with a Three Sisters garden involves careful attention to timing, seed spacing, and varieties. If you simply plant all three in the same hole at the same time, the result will be a snarl of vines in which the corn becomes overwhelmed.

