

Jala-Maize Marker Corn

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Before 1955 (perhaps 1939), the Jala maize race began to be used by U.S. maize companies to signal the location of test-maize plots (1955, D. Sywassink, Normal, IL, former Funk Co., personal communication 2006; Baker, Ray Baker files, Iowa State University (entirely thanks to B. Kuennen, Parks Library), 1939). It was planted as corner posts, whereas purple-plant maize (Minnesota Purple) was planted in rows around the perimeter. Both types were called "marker corn," Jala being called "corner marker" and Minnesota Purple "border marker." This use happened from the U.S. eastern seaboard to Minnesota and from Ontario to Louisiana. It continued until at least 2005. Funk, Ciba-Geigy, and NK were associated with it. (confirmation and additional crucial backbone information: R. Briggs, Towanda, IL, former Funk Co., personal communication 2006).

In December of 1938, Ray Baker received Jala ears from a Mexican station worker, Kankhoje. It seems that Baker experienced the normal limitations in obtaining Jala. This might suggest that this shipment of Jala was the only Jala around Iowa for a while at that time and, with its reputation for being the "giant" maize (save Cuzco), consequently could have been the only tropical material source for the Midwest for a while. Disheartened in trying to obtain examples of Jala cobs that were as long as claimed, Baker received another shipment in 1941, and possibly 1943 after the 1941 shipment had yet more small ears. This singles out this anecdote as the only source of inaugural Jala marker corn. After Kempton procured it in Jala, it was 15 years before Ray Baker had some of this maize and coincidentally another 15 years to an early confirmation of Jala marker corn.

From 1939 to almost 1999 (60 years), it seems that this Jala made it to the public as a tall display maize. This debut of tall tropical maize would have been the 25- to 30-ft plants of Iowa in the (approximately) 1940s (Karl, *Tallest Corn*, Independent, Allegany, NY, 2010). It is interesting because it is possibly the only tropical maize seed that was repetitively given to the public, something that occurred most easily through the ubiquitous legion of seed salesmen.

This Jala may be <35 ft (not field, but greenhouse) and have <40 leaves without short-night leafy, which even accords with Kempton's Jala (Kempton 1926: mean 29 leaves, six above the ear). Examples of its morphological features include a 3-ft, short-night tassel (27-ft plant), excluding its 13-inch internode, and a plant with three consecutive 17-inch internodes (Karl 2010, 1998 unpublished; Fig. 1, cf. Wellhausen, *Races of Maize in Mexico*, Bussey Institute of Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, 1952). The ears are characteristically large (Figure 2).

SOURCES

Baker 1939. Ray Baker files, Iowa State University
(entirely thanks to B. Kuennen, Parks Library)

Karl 2010. *Tallest Corn*, Independent, Allegany, NY

Wellhausen 1952. *Races of Maize in Mexico*,
Bussey Institute of Harvard University,
Cambridge, MA

Figure 1. Maize Internode Length. Jala Marker Corn. Two 27-ft plants, growth complete, New York, 1999. (cf. Jala graph in Mexican monograph)

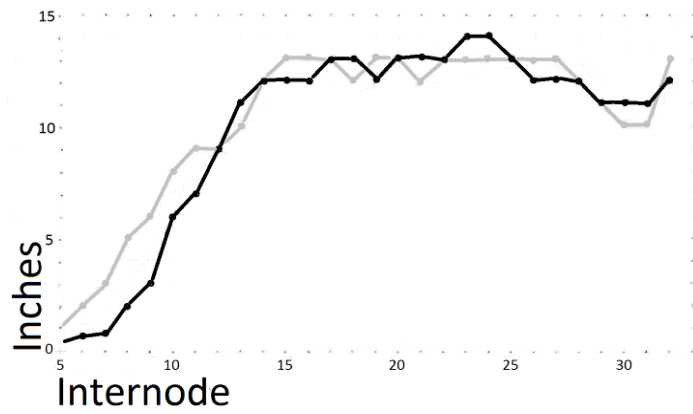


Figure 2. Maize Ear Length. Marker Jala, 2002, New York State. The plants were given long-night treatment when there were as many as nine leaves, June 22 to July 22.

