

Corn Falling Over

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Corn Falling Over

Corn falling over—often called **lodging**—can be caused by several factors:

- **Strong winds and heavy rain:** These are the most common causes, especially when soil is saturated, making it easier for roots to be pulled out. This is referred to as "root lodging." If the stalks aren't broken, many corn plants can recover by righting themselves ("goosenecking") within a few days. It's usually best to wait at least 4 days before taking action, as plants may recover on their own⁵⁷.
- **Shallow planting or weak root systems:** Corn planted too shallowly develops poor roots, making it more susceptible to falling over. Planting seeds at least 1 to 1.5 inches deep encourages stronger root growth¹.
- **Uneven moisture or drought stress:** Inconsistent watering can weaken roots and stalks, increasing the risk of lodging¹¹⁰.
- **Pests and diseases:** Corn rootworm larvae and corn borers can damage roots and stalks, causing plants to fall. Crop rotation and pest management are important preventative measures².
- **Small or sparse plantings:** Corn is wind-pollinated and benefits from being planted in blocks rather than single rows, which also helps the plants support each other¹.

What to do if your corn has fallen over:

- If stalks are not broken, gently straighten them and mound soil around the base or stake them for support³⁶.
- Water at the base to help settle the soil and encourage root re-establishment⁶.
- For severe cases, especially if pollination hasn't occurred, try to prop up the plants to ensure proper pollen transfer⁶.
- In the future, consider using support systems like the "Florida Weave" (twine and stakes) for extra stability, especially in windy areas³⁴.
- Mulching can help maintain even soil moisture and support root health¹.

If the corn is close to maturity or the stalks are badly damaged, it may be best to leave them alone and harvest what you can⁶. Most importantly, assess the extent of the damage and give the plants some time—they often recover better than expected if roots remain largely intact⁵⁷.