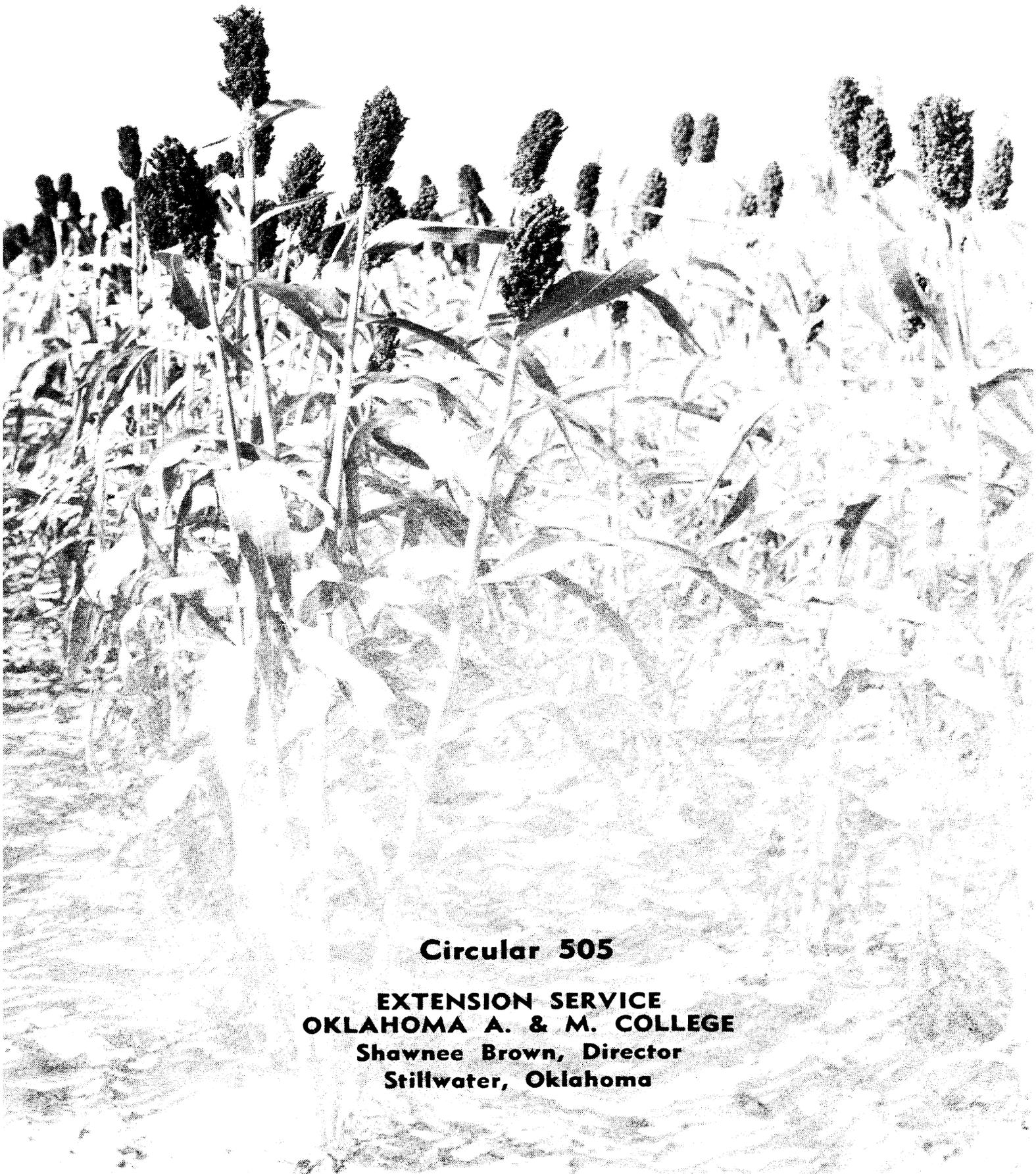


# **SORGHUMS for SIRUP**



**Circular 505**

**EXTENSION SERVICE  
OKLAHOMA A. & M. COLLEGE  
Shawnee Brown, Director  
Stillwater, Oklahoma**

# **SORGHUMS FOR SIRUP**

by

WESLEY CHAFFIN,  
Extension Agronomist

Sweet sorghums are grown in Oklahoma for sirup only to a limited extent. The crop is well adapted in the state and production could well be increased. A small acreage of sorghum on every farm to be made into sirup would make a substantial contribution to the family food supply. The commercial production of sorghum sirup offers the possibility of developing a new and important industry in the central and eastern sections of the state.

Sorghum sirup of high quality is bright in color and mild and delicious in flavor. In addition to supplying energy-giving materials, it contains iron and calcium which are essential in the diet. As a table sirup it rates high in popularity. Certain well known and popular foods including brown bread, ginger bread, baked beans, and various confections owe their distinctive flavor to sorghum sirup.

Making sorghum requires a large amount of fuel, such as wood or natural gas, and planting of sorghum for sirup should be generally limited to areas where adequate fuel supplies are available.

## **SOIL REQUIREMENTS**

Sweet sorghums can be grown on many different soil types, but loams and sandy loams are most desirable. The soil should be in good physical condition, at least medium in fertility, and should be well drained.

## **RECOMMENDED VARIETIES**

The varieties of sweet sorghums recommended in Oklahoma are Leoti, Sumac 1712, Sugar Drip, and Honey.

LEOTI is an early maturing variety, with stalks of medium size and height. The stalks produce high yields of juice which is relatively easy to process. This variety produces a sirup of excellent quality. Leoti is adapted throughout Oklahoma and is especially recommended in the northern half of the state.

SUMAC 1712 is a medium maturing variety which is grown both for sirup and for forage. The juice is easy to process and

the sirup is of good quality. It remains in liquid form and does not crystalize. Sumac 1712 is an excellent variety to grow for home use. It is well adapted throughout the state except the Panhandle and produces high yields.

SUGAR DRIP is grown for both sirup and forage. It produces high yields and is a good variety for sirup. The plants have extensive root systems and stiff stalks and are non-lodging even under adverse weather conditions. Sugar Drip is late maturing and is adapted in all of the state except the extreme northwestern section.

HONEY is a late maturing, high-yielding variety. The plants produce many suckers and tillers, and the stalks lodge more easily than some other varieties. The stalks are sweet and juicy and the sirup is considered by many to be of superior quality. Honey is best adapted in the southeast one-third of the state. (Honey is also known as Seeded Ribbon Cane.)

### **SEED TREATMENT**

Sorghum seed should be treated before planting to control kernel smut and to improve stands. Arasan, Spergon, Cerasan M, New-Improved Cerasan, and Copper Carbonate are all recommended for this purpose. The chemical should be used according to directions which are printed on the containers.

Small quantities of seed may be treated by placing the seed and dust in a closed container and shaking until each kernel comes in contact with the dust. For treating larger quantities of seed, a gravity-type treater or revolving-barrel treater can be used.

### **SEED BED PREPARATION**

Careful preparation of the seed bed is one of the most important steps in the production of sweet sorghums. Additional time spent on this operation reduces the amount of cultivation required after the crop is planted. A warm, firm, moist seed bed is essential, and any method of preparation which will provide this condition is satisfactory. The seed bed is usually prepared in about the same manner as for grain sorghums or corn.

### **RATE OF SEEDING**

Sweet sorghums are usually planted in rows about three and one-half feet apart. Under favorable conditions, planting one viable seed every two inches in the row should produce a

good stand of plants. For average conditions, about 3 to 5 pounds of seed per acre will be sufficient.

### **METHOD OF SEEDING**

Planting may be done with a lister planter or a one-row or two-row corn planter. Special sorghum plates are available for planters. Seed should be planted in moist soil and covered to a depth of one to two inches.

### **TIME OF SEEDING**

In southeastern Oklahoma planting may be done during the latter part of April. In the remainder of the state, planting should be done as early in May as weather conditions will permit.

### **SPACING IN ROW**

Under average conditions, the stand should be thinned to one plant, and occasionally two plants, every six to eight inches in the row. Thinning is usually done with a hoe.

A full stand of plants uniformly spaced in the row will usually result in the crop maturing more evenly, thus improving the quality of the sirup produced.

### **CULTIVATION**

The cultivation of the sweet sorghum is the same as for grain sorghums and corn.

### **WHEN TO HARVEST**

The first steps in harvesting sorghums for sirup are stripping and heading. The stalks should then be cut and crushed within two to three days after stripping, especially if the weather is warm. Delay in crushing may result in a reduction in the amount of extractable juice and the quality of the sirup may also be impaired.

Proper processing is essential in order to produce high quality sirup. Information on sirup making may be obtained from your local county agent or by writing to the Extension Service, Stillwater, Oklahoma.