

# Between the Rows

## *A Detasseling Guide*

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## Why We Detassel

Farmers buy hybrid seed corn to plant in their fields because yields are much higher than planting corn they had on the farm. In order to produce hybrid seed corn, two different types of corn are cross pollinated. The pollen from the tassel of one variety of corn (male corn) falls on the silks of the other variety of corn (female row). In order for cross pollination to occur, the tassel must be removed from the female plant to be sure there is no pollen from the female plant to contaminate the hybrid cross pollination. The seed harvested in the fall is the corn that farmers will plant in their fields the following spring.

## When does Detasseling Start?

Detasseling typically begins between July 10-15 and usually lasts 2-3 weeks. All of this varies depending upon the growing weather from April to July. We cannot give a specific date. We work 7 days a week, because the corn doesn't stop growing on the weekends. We try to avoid working on Sundays if possible, making Saturdays and Mondays longer days.

We call the day before you will start, so be ready to go when we call. We start off with a few workers and build up the numbers. Don't be discouraged if you aren't called immediately, we call our experienced workers first. We will have over 100 workers during the season.

We cannot guarantee start and end dates or hours because there are too many variables. It's all determined by the weather.



## How We Detassel

In most fields there are four female rows, one male row, four female rows, one male row, and so on. The pattern repeats across the field. In most cases the male and female row plants look different. You can count the rows to detassel the correct rows.

The tassels are removed from the female rows. We need to remove all tassels from these rows. It is **VERY IMPORTANT** to pull tassels in a timely matter. **They must not be allowed to produce pollen.** If this happens it can ruin the crop.

The tassels are pulled straight out of the top of the corn plant, leaving all the leaves with the plant. You will need to look up and down each plant to catch shorter plants which have tassels also.

In many of our fields a cutter machine will cut the tips of the tassels from the female plant. Two days later, a puller detasseling machine will go through the female rows and pull 40% to 85% of the tassels.

Then you will go through the field on foot and pull all tassels and partial tassels that were missed by the machine. This is known as "clean-up", looking up and down each stalk. We try to get this finished in two trips to the field. The field has to 100% pulled before we consider it done.

Some fields are not suitable for machines and are completely done on foot. We will go through these fields 4-5 times.

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## Attendance

Since the season only lasts 2-3 weeks, excused absences are in-season school activities only. Camps and vacations **do not** qualify. Other special circumstances will be determined on an individual basis including school driver's education, medical or family emergencies, and orthodontist appointments. We need your help so plan to be here.



Speak with Will Cornelius for special circumstances.

There is a sign out sheet inside the door of the first warehouse where we meet. ***You must sign out at least the day before and give the reason you will not be here.*** Arrangements will be made to bring you back to the office if you have to leave early. DO NOT tell us the morning you have to leave early. We are very busy and all arrangements are made the night before.

## Transportation

You will be responsible for providing your own transportation to the Cornelius Seed office during detasseling season. We do provide transportation to and from the fields. We will, upon request, give the names of other detassellers from your community who are also working so you can carpool.



## Payroll Details

Paychecks will be mailed at the end of the season.

Each worker must fill out the following forms before paychecks can be issued:

- I-9 Employment Eligibility Form with correct identification.
  - ◆ **List B Documents are:** Driver's License, Learner's Permit, School ID with picture, or School Report Card (if under 18).
  - ◆ **List C Documents are:** Social Security Card, Certified Birth Certificate.
  - ◆ The complete lists are on the back of the I-9 form.
- W-4 Withholding Allowance Certificate

These forms are mailed to you.

If you think there is an error in your paycheck, please talk to Nancy Johnson.

*Paychecks will be mailed to you at the end of the season.*

## Earning your Bonuses

We have opportunities for you to earn bonuses. These bonuses are:

- Years of experience with Cornelius Seed.
- Attendance incentive for those who are always here when needed.
- Positive attitude and satisfactory work.
- Bonus for working on Sunday.

These are some of the criteria you will be evaluated on:

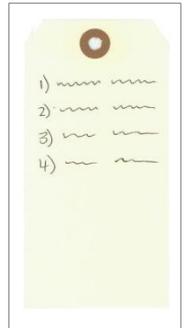
- Attendance - here each day as needed.
- On time - here for roll call and ready to go.
- Quality of work.
- Doing what you are told without comment.
- Initiative - doing what needs to be done before you are told.
- Remembering your pencil.

To be eligible, you must not have quit, but worked until we lay you off as the season winds down.



## In the Field

You will be assigned a set (2) rows of corn. Always start on the right side of your two rows. Put your name on the tag of the row you take. Sign the tag on the other row when you get the second row done. Record the number of the trip through the set in front of your name, i.e. 1 for the first time, 2 for the second time, etc. Leave your water jug at the end of the row.



When you come to a grass hollow, mark the row you come out of. Carefully count the rows on the other side to continue on the same set. There are often wheel tracks to follow to help you stay on your set.

When you complete your set, find the next set to be done and start it. When you complete your last row in a portion of a field, help the others finish their rows so you can move to another field.

## Typical Work Day

You need to be here at the Cornelius Seed office, 3 miles east of Andrew at 6:45 a.m. We begin with roll call at 7:00 a.m. You will have a crew of 8-12 and a crew leader and head to the field.

There will be an unpaid lunch break. If you come to the office for lunch, your lunch time runs from the time you leave the field until you re-enter it.

We try to be done as early as possible in the afternoon, but some days you may leave the field as late as 6:00 p.m. This often happens in the peak of the season when the most corn needs to be detasseled. You will have access to a telephone if you need to call for a ride.

## Making It through the Season

- Get a good night's sleep every night.
- Eat a good breakfast and bring a lot of healthy food for lunch.
- Make sure to bring your raingear.
- Use sunscreen and reapply through the day.
- Drink plenty of water throughout the day.
- Keep a positive attitude – the season is short.
- If you can make it through the first three days, you will make the season. They are the hardest as you Remember that paycheck at the end!

## Keep Things Cleaned Up

Do not leave any pop cans or other litter in the field. Keep lawns free of all trash including candy wrappers, cans, pop can tabs, etc. Keep your trash in your lunch box. A garbage can will be available at the office.

Please keep the vans clear of trash. Check for coats, boots, lunch boxes and water jugs at the end of the day.

## What to Wear

Mornings are cold and wet and afternoons are hot and humid for the most part. Wear old clothes since they will be worn out when the season is over.

- We suggest dressing in layers. By dressing in layers, you can remove layers as the dew dries.
- The bottom layer should be shorts and a t-shirt or tank top. Some people prefer a lightweight long sleeve shirt.
- The next layer should be lightweight pants and a sweatshirt.
- If it is cold you can add a light weight jacket.
- You may want to wear a rain suit over that as the dew is heavy in the morning.

For shoes we recommend old shoes and/or swamp/rain boots.

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## About the Weather

We work in all weather conditions. We work in rain, sun, and humidity which can create challenges. If it is storming or raining, DO NOT CALL, just come to work as usual at 7:00 a.m. We do not work if there is lightning but will resume work as soon as the storm passes. We recommend a rain suit and an extra set of clothes for rainy days. Remember, a rainy day in the summer can be cold.

## Tan Safely

Wearing a cap will help keep the sun out of your eyes and protect your head from the sun. Please use sunscreen.

Be sure to wear a hat and sunglasses because you are in direct sunlight.

## What to Bring

- Bring a good lunch with healthy snacks for during the day. Pack plenty of food because you will need more energy than usual.
- Bring plenty of sunscreen.
- Wear a cap or hat.
- Bring a half-gallon or gallon thermal water jug. A smaller container is not enough. You will be able to refill at noon. In addition you may want a bottle to attach to your waist that you can refill from your jug.
- Rain gear. We recommend a rain suit or rain poncho. A garbage bag with slits will work.
- Your employment forms and ID's.
- Gloves will protect your hands.
- Safety or sun glasses (we provide safety glasses).
- An extra set of dry clothes if it rains.

## Grounds for Dismissal

Automatic termination of employment will result from the following:

- Refusing to submit to authority (insubordination)
- Any kind of illegal activity
- Harassment
- Foul or abusive language
- Disrespect for fellow crew members or their property
- Throwing tassels in the cornfield
- Any other activity considered inappropriate by Cornelius Seed

## General Expectations

**BE ON TIME.** We start at 7 a.m. You need to be here and ready to go at 6:45 a.m.

Keep track of the pencil and safety glasses given to you and bring it with you each day.

NO profanity or smoking. DO NOT bring a knife. You do not need one!

According to state law, you must be 14 years of age by the time you begin detasseling.

Get your employment paperwork turned in as soon as you are hired.

Sign out the day before you need to be absent.

Do not touch someone else's property including lunch boxes and water jugs.

Pick up all trash. If it comes in your lunch box, it goes home in your lunchbox.

Report any problems to your crew leader.



## Rouging and Crew Leader Jobs

Detassellers who have at least two years experience with Cornelius Seed are eligible for a rouging crew. You must exhibit a great work ethic and a good understanding of seed fields. Crew leaders are usually recent high school graduates and/or college students. These people are selected based on their leadership and motivational skills when working with detasseling crews. Crew leader's base pay is higher than detassellers.