

# Between the Rows

*A Detasseling Guide*

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## Why We Detassel

Farmers buy hybrid seed corn to plant in their fields. In order to produce hybrid seed corn, two different types of corn are cross pollinated. The pollen (looks like yellow dust) from the tassel of one variety of corn (male corn) falls on the silks of the other variety of corn (female corn). 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 the second week of July and usually lasts 2-3 weeks. All of this varies depending upon the growing weather from April to July. We cannot give a specific start date. We will 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 cannot guarantee start and end dates or hours because there are so many variables. It's all determined by the weather.

We typically call the day before you will start. This will give you a chance to be ready to go the following morning. 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.

## 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. Look for rows with white tags.

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.* Remove the entire tassel. You will need to look high and low in each row to find 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 machine will go through the female rows and pull 40% to 85% of the tassels. Detassellers will then go through the field on foot and pull the remaining and partial tassels that were missed by the machine. This is known as "clean-up". We strive to have a field "clean" in two trips. The field must be 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 are counting on you, so plan to be here.



Speak with Will Cornelius for special circumstances.

There is a sign out sheet inside the door of the warehouse where we meet for roll call. ***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. Unless it is an unforeseen circumstance, avoid telling us in the mornings that you need to leave early. Mornings are very busy and we try to prepare as much as we can the night before.

## Transportation

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

## What Detasseling Does for You

Employers take notice when detasseling is listed on a job application or resume. This is when your attendance and work bonuses become important. We have heard many stories of how detasseling on a resume puts you to the top of the pile. Most employers in the Midwest recognize that



detasseling is a tough job and doing it well means working in less than ideal conditions. It tells volumes about the character and work ethic of the person applying to work for them.

## Payroll Details

Each worker must fill out the following forms. All forms and documents must be turned into the office prior to working:

- ◆ I-9 Employment Eligibility Form with correct identification. One each from list B and List C are required. The complete lists are on the back of the I-9 form.
- ◆ **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.
- ◆ W-4 Withholding Allowance Certificates
- ◆ Authorization to Mail Paycheck if you choose to have your paycheck mailed.

These forms are mailed to you or can be acquired at the office. Contact the office if you feel there is an error in pay.

**You will receive your paycheck 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.

The following are the criteria you will be evaluated on for bonuses:

- Attendance - here each day as needed.
- On time - here for roll call and ready to go.
- Quality of work.
- Doing what you are told to do 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.

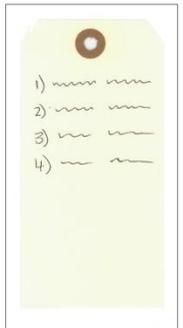
## About the Weather

We work in all weather conditions. Rain, sun, and humidity which can create challenges. If it is storming or raining in the morning, **DO NOT CALL**, please 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.



## In the Field

You will be assigned a set (2) rows of corn. Always start on the right side of your set. 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 trips 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, so others know the set is taken.



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 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.

## 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 this way, you can remove layers as the dew dries. The bottom layer could be shorts and a t-shirt or tank top. Some people prefer a light weight 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.
- A wet cloth or cooling neck wrap around your neck helps keep you cool.
- **Remember you are working in a public environment. A shirt MUST be worn at all times.**

## Tan Safely

**Please use sunscreen.**

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

We will provide a pair of gray tinted safety glasses. These will protect your eyes from corn leaves and direct sunlight.

## Typical Workday

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 prior to 7:00 a.m. You be assigned to a crew of 8-12 members. Your crew leader will transport you to the field in a van.

There will be an unpaid lunch break. 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 may happen in the peak of the season when the most corn needs to be detasseled. You will have access to a telephone in the office if you need to call for a ride.

*Respect and courtesy for yourself and others is always appropriate.*

## Making It Through the Season

- Get a good night's sleep every night.
- Eat a good breakfast and bring healthy food for lunch.
- **Drink plenty of water throughout the day.**
- Use sunscreen and reapply through the day.
- Bring rain gear for the rainy days.
- Keep a positive attitude – the season is short.
- When you make it through the first three days, you will make the season.

Remember that paycheck at the end!

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## What to Bring

- Mark your name on ALL items you 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 smaller bottle you can fill from your jug to attach to your waist to take down the row. Mark your name on your water jug.
- Rain gear. We recommend a rain suit or rain poncho. A garbage bag with slits will work.
- Gloves will protect your hands but not required.
- Safety or sunglasses (we provide safety glasses).
- An extra set of dry clothes if it rains.

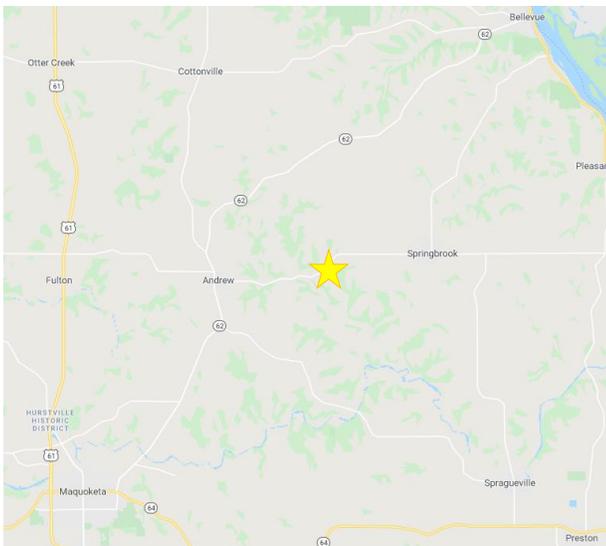
## Keep Things Cleaned Up

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.

## Directions

We are located 3 miles east of Andrew or 3 miles west of Springbrook on E17 (or 150<sup>th</sup> St). The plant is on the south side of the highway. Parking is available on the north side of the office for 2020 due to construction. Please do not park on the road or next to the office.



## 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!

Leave your cell phone IN your lunch box. You will be able check it at lunch.

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

Paperwork MUST be turned in before you can start.

Sign out the day before you need to be absent.

Do not tamper with anyone 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, college students and adults. 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.

Crew leaders MUST have a clean driving record.