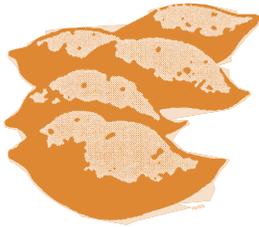




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Sweet Potatoes



One of America's oldest, most delicious and most wholesome foods. Few plants yield a more abundant crop... a crop that can be stored at no cost and the taste improves with each day in storage. Families are now growing their own sweet potatoes for Thanksgiving, Christmas and other special occasions. They can be grown in every state.

Sweet potatoes are grown from rooted sprouts or "slips" produced by mature roots from the previous year's crop. Ideal sprouts are 6 to 8 inches long with 4 to 6 leaves and several roots. Lime and fertilizer should be applied before tilling. As a general rule, broadcast 1.5 to 2 lbs. of 5-20-20 or 4-12-16 fertilizer or equivalent per 50 feet of row. On relatively poor or sandy soils, the rate may be increased slightly. Plants should be spaced 1 foot apart in 3-foot rows. A starter solution of 1 lb. of high phosphate fertilizer such as 10-52-17 or 10-50-10 in 15 gallons of water should be applied at the rate of 1/2 pint per plant when transplanting.

Sweet potatoes are planted in late May or early June in Ohio. Yields are often highest when slips are planted on broad ridges 8 to 10 inches high and 12 to 18 inches wide. The soil should be plowed deeply before planting to assure looseness. Roots tend to be odd-shaped in heavy, tight soils. Insect and disease problems are generally not serious in Ohio provided healthy seed roots are used. Wireworms can cause some damage if present in large numbers.

Sweet potatoes should be harvested on a warm, sunny day after the first mild frost - usually in early October. Roots are easily damaged by severe frosts and cold soils. Vines should be cut and removed ahead of time for easier harvest. Roots can be dug with a shovel, hoe, potato fork or potato digger but should be handled gently at all times to prevent bruises and cuts, which lead to rotting in storage. Roots should be allowed to dry on the soil before being placed in crates or boxes for curing.

Curing is a key factor in successful storage of sweet potatoes. Not only does curing promote rapid healing of damaged areas, but it also increases the sugar content and improves texture. Curing is accomplished by holding roots at 80 to 85 degrees and 90 to 95 percent relative humidity for 6 to 10 days. A simple method is to cover a stack of crates with poly film. Crates should be placed on slats and stacked loosely to allow for ventilation. Wetting floors will increase the humidity; however, the roots should not be wet. A portable electric heater with a fan and thermostat control can be used to maintain an even temperature and provide air movement. A small section of the plastic should be lifted to prevent excessive moisture.

After curing, sweet potatoes should be stored at 55 to 60 degrees and a relative humidity of 85 to 90 percent. Most varieties will keep for up to 6 months under these conditions. Temperatures below 50 degrees can cause discoloration of the flesh, internal breakdown, off flavors and decay; temperatures above 60 degrees at high humidity stimulate sprouting and pithiness.

For small lots, some home gardeners have found that wrapping individual roots in newspaper and stacking loosely in boxes or baskets provides satisfactory storage.

Most Popular Varieties

Centennials

This is America's leading sweet potato. Chances are this is the variety you bought at your local market. Carrot color inside. Baby bakers in 90 days.

Vineless "Bunch" Porto Ricos

Also called "Bush" Porto Ricos. The favorite of gardeners with limited space because it does not have long vines. Porto Rico has a copper-colored outside skin with light red flesh. Delicious "old fashioned" flavor, an excellent baking potato. Baby bakers in 100 days.

Travis

One of the most interesting varieties. The plants look smaller than others but yields are exceptional. Any potatoes not dug after 90 days from planting can quickly grow to jumbos. Outside skin is red-orange and inside color is orange.

Nancy Halls

The "Yellow Yam" of the 30's and 40's. Older gardener's favorite. Light skin and yellow flesh. Juicy, waxy and sweet when baked. If taste is more important than beauty, try Nancy Halls.

Georgia Jets

A spectacular variety with fast growth and extra high yields. Ideal for home gardeners, especially in the north. Maximum yield from minimum space. Red, almost purple, outside skin with deep orange inside color. Moist flesh and superb flavor.

New Jewell

The improved Centennial. The blue ribbon winner for color, taste and yield. Rosy red outside skin, deep orange inside. Bakes quickly with a soft texture.

Vardaman

The latest release of a "Bush" variety and the most spectacular. Golden yellow outside skin that darkens soon after digging. Deepest, brightest orange color of all. Vardaman outyields most varieties. Purple foliage is an eyecatcher.

White Yams

Sometimes called Triumphs, Southern Queen, Poplar Root, "Choker" and White Bunch. White as cotton inside and out, and sweet as sugar. One of the America's oldest. This drier potato is a most unusual variety.



*Making the world beautiful
one flower at a time.*