

SWEET POTATO GROWING BASICS

Adapted from George's Plant Farm Tator School

ARRIVAL OF YOUR SWEET POTATO PLANTS

Upon opening the box, we may appear to be somewhat pale or brown in color but WE ARE ALIVE AND WELL. We look this way because we have been enclosed in this dark box for a few days. Our leaves and roots have been conditioned for this journey, but we need to be planted as soon as possible. Please return us to the good earth and give us a nice drink of water and we will reward you with a bountiful harvest.

SOIL PREPARATION

A southern exposure and good drainage of sandy loam soil and PH of 6.0-7.0 is ideal for growing sweet potatoes. (1) Till the soil deep in spring 2-3 weeks before planting; (2) Per 25-foot row: mix together and till in row 3 lbs. of 8-8-8 fertilizer; (3) Make bedded rows approx. 36-42 inches apart. Bed rows should be 8-10 inches high and 12-14 inches wide and flat on top. **Northern gardeners should consider laying black plastic over bed rows 1 week before planting. Cut 3X3 inch holes in plastic for planting.**

SETTING PLANTS IN GARDEN AND SURVIVAL OF PLANTS

Set plants as soon as possible after arrival. Best time is 2 hours before dark. Plant spacing 10-16 inches. Wide spacing of plants should speed up maturity. Short spacing a more uniform and possibly smaller baking size. Use a small garden tool or hand to set plants about 3-4 inches deep or leave one node above ground. If immediate planting is not possible, remove plants and wrapping from box, stand upright in shady place under protection from frost, rain, wind, sun. Don't wet leaves; keep roots damp only. For longtime storage, keep plant roots on wet moss, sawdust, newspapers, etc. 12-100 plants set in flower pots in house until weather improves.

CULTIVATION, SIDE DRESSING, WATER

Uncontrolled grass-weeds can destroy your potato crop. Side dress your plants 30 days after transplanting with 8-8-8 fertilizer, 3 lbs. per 25-foot row. This will feed the roots at the proper time for an abundant yield. Sweet potatoes need about one half inch of water per week in 85-100 deg. temps.

HARVESTING YOUR POTATOES

Check your sweet potatoes around 90 days by digging underneath your rows with a fork or shovel, making sure not to detach potatoes from vines. If not to your satisfaction gently lower back into the ground and cover with soil. Dig your potatoes no later than light frost (leaves droop).