

REEMS CREEK NURSERY

Sweet Potatoes

Ipomoea batatas

A Garden Guide

Sweet potatoes, or *Ipomoea batatas*, are native to tropical America. The starchy, sweet-tasting tuberous roots of the plant can be eaten in a variety of ways - as mashed potatoes, roasted with herbs, added into soups, baked with other fall veggies, and more. They are nutritional powerhouses, with their fiber content, complex carbohydrates, protein, beta-carotene, Vitamin C, iron, and calcium.



Wait to plant sweet potatoes until about 10 days after the last frost date and the weather is reliably warm. Don't be in a rush - they thrive when daytime temperatures are nearing 90°F and nighttime lows are in the 60°Fs to 70°Fs. Sweet potatoes grow best in full sunlight (6-8 hours) in a well-drained, loamy to sandy soil. If you have clay soil, amend with **organic composts, soil conditioner**, and make a ridge up to 6-8" high before planting. Apply **mycorrhizae** directly to roots prior to planting to not only increase yields, but to improve soil health. Set plants 12 -15" apart in 3-foot rows in a sunny, well-drained spot. Sweet potatoes need at least 1" of water per week. Watering can be reduced as the plants come closer to maturity; this will help prevent your tubers from cracking.

High altitude and north-slope gardeners may benefit from covering the ridge with black plastic about 3 weeks before plants are expected to arrive. The plastics will warm the soil, giving you a longer growing period and therefore larger harvests.

Sweet potatoes can also be planted in hanging baskets. The yield will be smaller than if they were planted in the ground, but the foliage hanging down makes a lovely effect on a porch or balcony.

Harvest sweet potatoes BEFORE the first frost, as frost will damage them. Handle gently since they bruise easily. After harvest, cure the potatoes in a warm (85° F is preferable) location for 2 weeks, then store at 60° F for 6-8 weeks. From year to year, rotate crop locations to prevent buildup of pests. Version 2.1 Jan 23

