

Guide to Growing Sweet Potatoes



Profile and Nutrition Facts

These mild, sweet, and starchy vegetables are hearty and delicious. Despite their name, they are not related to potatoes. Sweet potatoes contain lots of Vitamin A, Vitamin B6, Vitamin C, potassium, and fiber.

There are many different varieties of sweet potatoes. They can be found in a variety of colors (yellow, purple, white, and orange), sizes and shapes. The Georgia Jet and Centennial varieties grow best in the Zone 5/Midwest climate.

Planting guide

It's best to plant sweet potatoes in soil that is well drained and receives plenty of sunlight. Plant them a month after the last frost in soil that is around 65 F. The soil should be loose, well fertilized with compost or fertilizer. To plant, place slips 12-18 inches away from each other and 3-4 feet between rows. This allows enough room for them to spread out.

How to maintain

Sweet potatoes are very low maintenance. They do best when the soil is kept moist but can survive in drier soil. Trellising the vines are not only beautiful, but will provide needed airflow for healthy leaves and stems. Common pests are wireworms and nematodes, as well as rodents that burrow in soil. Rotate the crops to reduce the chances of pests.

How to harvest

Harvesting can begin 3-4 months after planting or when the leaves turn yellow. To harvest, loosen the soil around the plant and using your hands pick the sweet potatoes out. Sweet potato vines are also edible when cooked, and can be used as a hearty green, adding a delicious crunch from the vines.



How to enjoy sweet potatoes

Sweet potatoes are very versatile. You can steam them and add oil and cinnamon. Or you can make sweet potato fries by cutting them up, tossing them in oil, and putting them in 400 F oven for 20 minutes. They can also be added to salads, soups, and stews. In addition, sweet potato vines are a delicious addition to stew, stirfries, or sauteed with oil and seasoning.