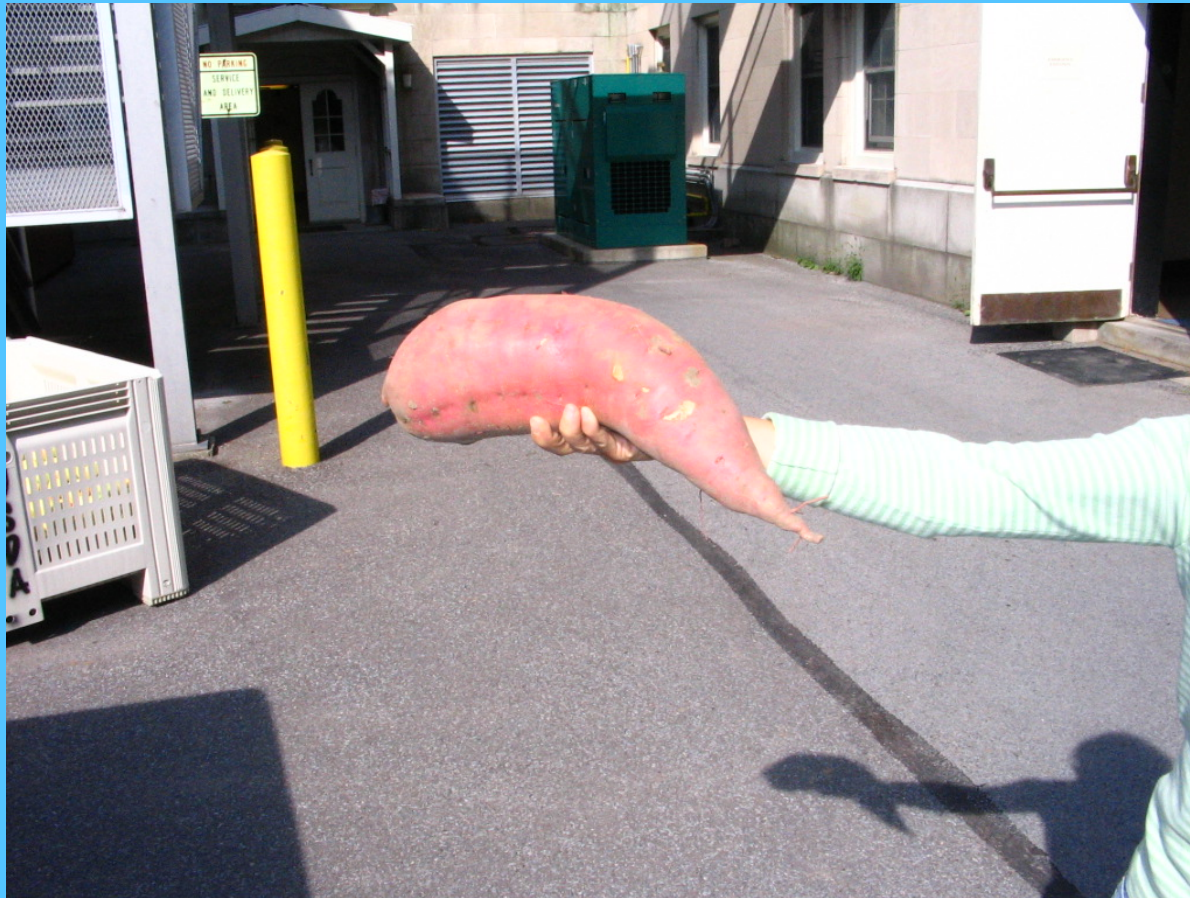


Growing Sweet Potatoes in your Home garden

Jim Ballerstein



Homework Basics

Good Plants & what cultivar

How to Plant

Keeping them growing (pests)

Harvest

Curing

Storage and Eating!

Determining a market.

Picking Cultivars

Season Length 100-130 days

Sweetness and Texture

Flesh Color (orange, nutty, white)

Moist vs Dry

Possible Sources

Scott Farms in N. Carolina

Steele Sweet Potatoes in Tennessee

Georges Plant Farm N. Carolina

How many slips to plant?

A 15 ft bed 3 ft. wide enough for 24 plants.

Buy in bulk (100) share with neighbors

Picking Cultivars

Carolina Ruby & Burgundy

Beauregard and Covington

Hernandez

Bonita and O'Henry

Murasaki & Purple

Jewel, Georgia Jet, Centennial

Beauregard



Beauregard

O' Henry



O'Henry



Carolina Ruby



Hernandez
e2



Japanese

PLANTING

Order plants to arrive last week of May or first week of June.

Have bed (see next page) ready.

Making the bed

Spread some basic fertilizer or compost.

Work ground and make a firm raised bed.

This can be as simple as using a shovel and mounding a hill from both sides. Leaves or straw between rows.

4-8 inches high & 18 in. wide - single row.

Same height but 3 feet wide - double row.

PLANTING

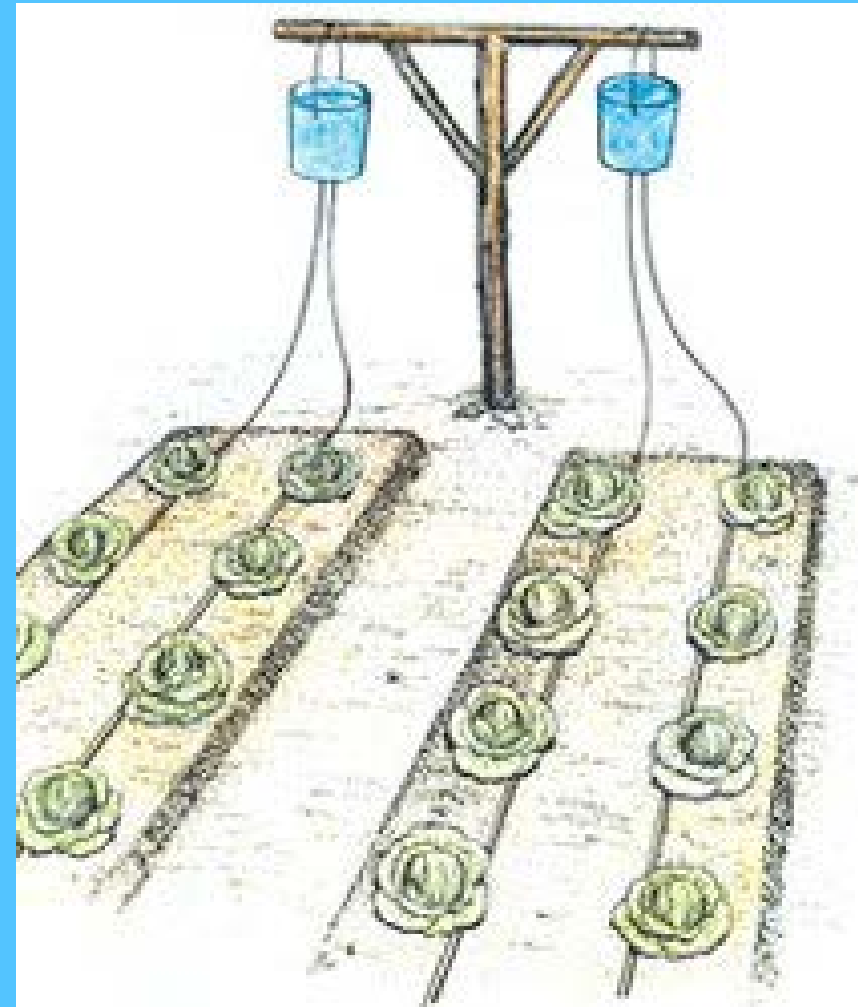
Can use bare ground but black plastic mulch will help warm soil and keep weeds down.

Spread black plastic over the bed.

If using plastic mulch, insert some trickle tape down the center of the bed for irrigation. Shovel some soil on edges and sides to keep the plastic tight to the bed.

Gravity flow buckets plumbed to trickle tape.

Irrigation



PLANTING

Plant slips as soon after arrival as possible.

Keep plants cool - 50-60 degrees and in moist (not wet) sand if need to wait a few days.



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Put in water for an hour or two prior to planting



Soak them in water couple hours before planting

Punch hole in the plastic and open hole

Planted 15 inches apart with starter fertilizer

3-4 inches deep (4-6 nodes underground)





Fertilization

Water them well that first two weeks. Maybe once a week after that. They like heat and can withstand some drier conditions once established.

Give them some soluble N (20 lbs per acre) when they start to run the vines.

This will kick start them.

Next

Some research that they respond well to Mn, Cu and Zn so a shot of minors might help especially if sandier soil

Pests

Deer love the plants so necessary to fence or do something.

Mice will get under plastic and chew the developing tubers and cut holes in drip tape.

No serious problems with **insects** or **disease**

Weeds (next page)

Weeds

Black Plastic good for the bed, hand weed weeds that come up in planting hole.

Mulch of straw or other can be used suppress weeds between the beds.

Herbicide can be used if carefully sprayed between rows about mid June before plants take off and after flush of weeds.

Just Before Harvest



When to Harvest

Late September

There is research that if soil temps get below 50 degrees, they will not store. Not getting much heat units after late September anyway

Don't wait until frost!

Don't wait until frost!

Cutting Plastic



Pulling plastic up







Japanese Jumbos



Smalls



CURING

Don't wash them (can brush the dirt off)

Put them in a dry shaded spot with air movement
for four to five days (open porch)

Heals over cuts and scrapes

Save the best ones for longer storage

Nicks that will heal





Storage

Cool not cold (50-60 degrees) Humidity does not seem to be an issue if they are cured well.

Sweet Potatoes Store very well

Cut tubers in two if too big

Will callous over and can use next week

Eating

Sweet Potatoes are a superfood and taste good.

**I like to store them for at least couple weeks
before eating.**

Typical baked (oven, grill or microwave).

Stir Fry the smaller ones.

Tender tips can be steamed.

Sweet potato fries.



Carolina
Ruby

Henry

MARKETING

Roadside Stands

Local Diners (sweet potato fries)

Organic

Personal consumption

Animal feed (small culls)

Determine your Market

- Farm stand, Farm Market**
- Grocery Store, Diners and/or Restaurants**
- Start small - .25 acre (1500 plants) should produce 1500-2000 lbs or better**
- Count on 2-3 lbs per plant and should be at least 50 % marketable**
- Warm year (2005) had 7-8 lbs per plant**

Marketing continued

Niche markets for different colors and flavors (need to develop)

Cultivar Japanese is high dry matter and Asians recognize these and they stir fry

In certain areas, there is a market for young vine tips. Be creative!

Promote health benefits and cooking suggestions (pluses of sw potatoes over white potatoes)

What are other gardeners doing?

Varieties?

Spacing?

Fertilizer?

Mice?

Weeds

Storage

Handouts

Sweet Potatoes – The Worlds
Vegetable Champ

Sweet Potato Planting Guide

Scott Farms

Leaf Types



Centennial



O'Henry



Japanese



Carolina Ruby



Beavergard



Georgia Jet



Hernandez



Vardaman



Have Fun!