

Sweet Potatoes



Sweet potatoes are grown from “slips” – shoots that are grown from a mature sweet potato (or “tuber”). Milmont Garden Center has sweet potato slips available each summer for a limited time.

PLANTING

Sweet potatoes require loose, well-drained soil to grow successfully. Create either raised beds or mounds 6” to 8” tall and about 12” wide. Plant slips 12” to 18” apart deeply enough to cover the roots plus about a ½” of stem. Slips can be planted after the last spring frost date.

WATERING

Water thoroughly after planting. For the first watering, you can use a starter solution that is high in phosphorous. Water every day for the first week and every other day the second week. If it rains, adjust your watering schedule accordingly. NOTE: *If you are planning to store any potatoes, do not give the plants extra water late in the season.*

FERTILIZING

Side-dress sweet potatoes 3 to 4 weeks after transplanting with 3 pounds of 5-10-10 fertilizer per 100 foot row. Remember to keep weeds down, but do not prune the vines. They should be allowed to grow vigorously.

HARVESTING

Using a spade fork, dig up potatoes, as needed, as soon as they are big enough for a meal – generally 3 to 4 months after planting when the leaves start to yellow. You can leave them in the ground up until the fall frost. When harvesting, handle them carefully, as they bruise easily. Shake off excess dirt but do not wash until ready to use!

STORAGE

Sweet potatoes need to be “cured” if they are going to be stored. Curing allows a second skin to form over any scratches and bruises that may have occurred during. To cure, keep tubers in a warm place (about 80°F) at high humidity (about 90%) for 10 to 14 days. For best curing, make sure the potatoes are not touching one another.

After curing, throw out any bruised potatoes, and then wrap each one in newspaper and pack them carefully in a wooden box or basket. Store sweet potatoes in a root cellar or other place with a temperature of at least 55°F (ideal range is 55° to 60°F). The tubers should last for about 6 months. When removing potatoes from storage, remember to be gentle so they won’t bruise.

SOME “WISDOM” FROM THE FARMER’S ALMANAC

Sweet potatoes will retain their color if cooked with a slice of lemon.

