PHS Community Gardens

Growing Sweet Potatoes

Sweet potatoes arrive as "slips," the growth sprouts that emerge from a sweet potato. Sometimes, the slips appear damaged and wilting upon arrival, but once planted in proper conditions, sweet potato slips will thrive. Slips may or may not have visible roots, this does not impact yield.

GROWING SWEET POTATOES:

Site Preparation

- Plant sweet potatoes into fertile, well-drained soil
- Sweet **potatoes** have tropical origins, therefore they perform best in warm, full-sun locations
- Planting sweet potatoes into cold soil or areas with poor drainage may cause rot
- Sweet potatoes prefer sandy loam soils, however planting into raised beds is a good option to ensure warmth and adequate drainage

Planting

- Plant sweet potatoes 4"-6" deep 10"-18" apart, the larger the spacing, the larger potential for tubers
- When planting, ensure that all "nodes," of developing roots are buried
- Immediately after planting, thoroughly water your slips
- Slips take about 1-2 weeks to become established, during this time, regularly check slips to ensure they do not dry out
- Planting into black plastic mulch is a popular way to suppress weeds and ensure soil warmth

Seasonal Maintenance

- Keep young plants weed free with shallow cultivation to protect plant establishment
- Do NOT trim runners on sweet potatoes
- It is suggested to cover sweet potatoes with row covers at the beginning and end of their growing season if low overnight temperatures are anticipated

Harvest & Storage

- Frost will damage plants and tubers
- Before onset of potential frost, mow sweet potato foliage (or harvest to eat!) and dig the tubers with care, as to not damage the skins
- Cure sweet potatoes in a warm dark room for a week before moving into 55-60 degree storage. Do not store below 50 degrees.

2024 SWEET POTATO VARIETIES

- Luminance (Japanese Murasaki Type)
- Covington (Standard)

Q: "Which end of my Sweet Potato Slip should I plant?"

A: Root side in the ground. Although roots may not be present on your sweet potato slips, there are other indicators of which end to plant:

- The root end tends to be thicker
- Petioles of leave will be facing the opposite direction of the root end
- Nodes are present where new root growth will happen