



# SWEET POTATOES

## BASIC CARE

### SUN

- Sweet potatoes are a tropical plant and need a long growing season with lots of sun
- Full exposure 6-8 hours a day

### WATER

- Immediately after planting the slips, sweet potatoes will need frequent, even watering.
- Watering should remain regular throughout the growing season, moist soil will help with even potato growth (rather than fighting their way through hard soil).

### HARVESTING

- Sweet potatoes should be ready to harvest in 90-120 days.
- The vines will begin to die back as they approach harvest.
- Harvest before first frost to avoid losing the crop.
- When harvesting, cut back to the vines so you can more easily remove sweet potatoes, just leave a little bit of vine poking out of the top so you remember where the potatoes are (esp. in a row, not so much a bucket, hard to lose them there).
- Loosen the soil around the sweet potatoes with a trowel or potato fork (depending on what they're planted in) making sure not to pierce the potatoes. Pull them out, shake off soil, and allow to dry before curing.

### STORING

- Sweet potatoes need to cure in a warmer (80\*) area for a week or two to gain their full sweetness.
- After curing, they should be stored in a cool, dark environment (like a pantry) until ready to use. Without exposure to moisture, they can last for many months and are delicious year round.

### WEEDING

Because sweet potatoes grow underground (where weed roots also like to grow), they'll need frequent weeding. Removing competition helps the plants produce better, healthier crops.

## COMMON PROBLEMS

### WEEDS

It's hard to weed around sweet potatoes because they spread out so much over the surface and have delicate roots that you don't want to disturb. You mostly need to hand-weed (as opposed to using hoes) to avoid damage to the sweet potato plant, which can be very time consuming. Mulching around the plants can cut down on weed growth.

### INSECT PESTS

To avoid nematodes and other soil-dwelling pests, rotate where you grow your sweet potatoes from year to year. There's not much that can be done if they wreck havoc on your crop on a particular year, except turn over the soil well, plant garlic there the following year and plant your sweet potatoes somewhere else.