

## SWEET POTATOES 2022

This year we offer seven varieties, available in 3.5 in. pots. Each pot contains 3 slips of one variety. Please note that sweet potatoes usually don't arrive till mid-May. We will let you know, via our newsletter, when they get here!

**Centennial:** Coppery skin, tender, savory, deep orange flesh. Good keeper and wonderful for cooking. Resistant to internal cork, fusarium wilt. Vigorous vines adapted to heavier soils. High yields. Vining. 90-100 days.

**Carolina Ruby:** Bright red skin, richly flavored, dark orange flesh. Excellent for baking, wedges, mashed. Vigorous and reliable; resistant to fusarium wilt, soil rot. Vining. 80-90 days.

**Diane** (a.k.a. Garnet): Smooth, dark red skin, dark orange, moist flesh. Excellent baker. Heavy producer. Vining. 90-100 days.

**Kotobuki:** Purple/red skin, cream colored, dry flesh, nutty, roasted chestnut flavor. Delicious baked, in salads, soups, stews and stir fries, for tempura. Vining. 100+ days.

**Nancy Hall:** Tan skin, cream/yellow flesh. Heirloom variety famous for flavor. Very sweet after curing; keeps well. Vining. 110 days.

**Okinawan:** Tan skin, purple flesh, high in fiber and antioxidants. Tubers are dry and sweet; especially delicious when wrapped in foil and baked. Vining. 120-140 days.

**Vardaman:** Golden yellow skin, deep red-orange flesh, superior flavor. A bush type with short vines – 3-4 ft., perfect for the smaller garden, and a beautiful plant. Resistant to fusarium wilt. 90-95 days.

### **Planting sweet potatoes:**

Sweet potatoes are easy to grow and require little care other than regular watering. The handy thing about vining varieties is that they cover the ground, look beautiful, suppress weeds, and help keep the soil moist. Also, they are said to repel squash bugs, so planting a few sweet potatoes with your squashes and pumpkins might be worth a try: one sweet potato per 2-3 squashes or pumpkins, let them vine together. Each sweet potato plant will yield 2-3 pounds.

Sweet potatoes need full sun, and warm, well-drained soil; work some compost in, but do not apply fresh manure or high nitrogen fertilizers. We suggest inoculating the soil with beneficial microbes, using either compost or fertilizer that contains these helpful creatures. You will find it easier to harvest the potatoes if you plant in a raised or mounded bed, so that you can reach in from the sides to check the size of the tubers. A bed that is a flattened ridge or mound will also have improved drainage. To warm up the soil, cover the bed with black plastic (or a plastic hoop house) for a few weeks before you plant. Then you can plant by cutting slits through the black plastic, or you can remove the plastic and mulch the bed with 6 inches of organic material about 2 weeks after you plant.

Until you are ready to plant, keep the slips in a shady spot and do not let them dry out. You can trim off any slimy or wilted leaves. Set out the slips in warm (60-70°) soil, about 2 weeks after last frost date (here that would be about May 24), or even later. A recent article reports excellent results when sweet potatoes are planted in early July. Try to plant in the evening, to avoid sunburning the plants their first day, and plant on a warm day. If it is unseasonably cool, wait. Alternatively, you can plant earlier if you cover with a cloche, row cover, or hoop house for protection.

Plant slips 12-15 inches apart, in rows 3-4 feet apart (1 foot apart for bush variety). Plant the slips at the same depth as in the pots, or a little deeper, and water thoroughly. Make sure the soil stays damp for the first week, then you can water normally, but don't let the soil get too dry. Mound soil or mulch over the row, up to the main

stem of the plant, as the plants grow. Vines may spread to 20 feet.

Harvest the main crop when potatoes have reached acceptable size, which will probably be about the time of the first frost in the fall (about October 1 to October 10, although we have had frost in late September); harvest **immediately** if the vines are injured by the frost, or decay in the vines will work its way down to the potatoes. If you want sweet potatoes earlier (or if you just want to check on the size of the tubers), you can dig into the side of your mounded bed and carefully remove a few tubers, taking care not to injure the main plant. About 2 weeks before you intend to harvest the main crop, stop watering. Be careful when digging the potatoes, as they bruise easily. Brush off dirt, do not wash. Cure indoors in a warm (85°) place, for a week, then store in a cool place (55-60°).