



Washington State University, May 2025

<https://vegetables.wsu.edu/sweetpotato>

Welcome to the first sweetpotato newsletter of 2025! To better provide support to the farmers and gardeners participating in our trials this year, we will be sending out one or two newsletters per month throughout the growing season with reminders, resources, and answers to common questions about growing sweetpotatoes. Please feel free to contact us with additional questions!

- Sammi Grieger: [samantha.grieger@wsu.edu](mailto:samantha.grieger@wsu.edu) (Olympic/Kitsap Peninsula)
- Laura Schulz: [laura.schulz@wsu.edu](mailto:laura.schulz@wsu.edu) (Other areas in WA/OR)



*Sweetpotato slip just after planting (left), and sweetpotato plants growing in raised beds covered in plastic mulch in late summer (right) at WSU Mount Vernon NWREC in 2023.*

## Field Preparation

Now is the time to think about getting your field plots ready for sweetpotatoes!

- Sweetpotatoes are typically planted in **6-8 inch tall raised beds** to improve soil aeration, increase soil warming, and make harvest easier
- Sweetpotatoes have relatively low nutrient requirements, requiring about **100 lbs/acre nitrogen** (1.5 lb/100 foot row)
- Soil-warming **black plastic mulch** is essential for good yields in western Washington; maximize soil warming by ensuring tight contact between the mulch and the soil surface
- **Drip irrigation** works well; place a row of drip tape to the side of slips under plastic mulch

- **10 inch spacing between slips** is recommended for western Washington; in eastern Washington or other warmer areas, 12 or 15 inch spacing can be used
- **Spacing between rows is typically 3 to 6 feet**, depending on equipment requirements
- Sweetpotatoes grow best in **well-drained loam**, sandy-loam or clayey-loam soils; heavy clay soils constrict root growth and make harvest difficult
- **Warm soil temperatures** are essential for slip survival; wait to plant until soil is at least 65°F at a 4-inch depth for 4 days in a row, typically 3 to 4 weeks after the frost-free date
- Select a site that was **not recently in grasses (i.e. pasture) or clover** to reduce chances of wireworm damage

## Slip Production

If you are producing your own slips this year, you may be starting to think about preparing those slips for planting into the field.

- Slips are ready to cut when they are 6-12 inches long and have **5-8 leaves**
- **Longer vines can be divided** into multiple slips with 5-8 leaves each
- **Cut slips ½ to 1 inch above the soil** to prevent transmission of diseases and insects
- **Sanitize cutting tools** with alcohol frequently to avoid transmitting viruses
- **Do not strip leaves** from lower nodes before planting
- Slips should **never be refrigerated**
- **Slips can be stored after cutting** for 1-4 days before planting in a shady location outdoors
- For **longer slip storage**, place many slips loosely together in a large pot with potting mix, burying only the bottom inch of the slips, and recut ends before planting
- **Pre-rooting slips** before planting is generally not recommended as it can result in misshapen and difficult-to-harvest sweetpotato roots



*Slip production in the greenhouse (left), and slips placed loosely in potting mix for long term storage (right) at WSU Mount Vernon NWREC.*



Learn how sweetpotato slips are produced indoors in our video [How to Plant Sweetpotato Slips Indoors!](#)

## Upcoming Webinar

We are hosting a webinar “How to Grow Sweetpotatoes in Western Washington” on Thursday, May 15, 2025 from 6:00-7:00 pm. This online webinar will cover the basics of growing, harvesting, curing and storing sweetpotatoes with tips for getting the most out of this crop in the soils, climate and weather found in western Washington.



**Please register for the webinar:**

<https://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/6642485>

Zoom Information:

<https://wsu.zoom.us/j/96311040474?pwd=tOju19ZXVr8wtfUWayc5XxvgnRajtV.1&jst=1>

- Meeting ID: 963 1104 0474
- Passcode: 283319

## Fun Fact!

**Did you know:** Sweetpotato (*Ipomoea batatas*) is in the Convolvulaceae (Morning Glory) Family, unlike potatoes (*Solanum tuberosum*) that are in the Solanaceae (Nightshade) Family, and true yams (*Dioscorea* spp.) that are in the Dioscoreaceae (Yam) Family. This makes sweetpotato a great choice for crop rotations, because there are no other crops in the same family as sweetpotato that are cultivated in the United States!

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