

FGCU Food Forest

Plant Database

Sweet Potato (*Ipomoea batatas*)

Quick Facts

Origin: Tropical America.

Description: Sweet Potato is a herbaceous perennial vine that features beautiful flowers and large starchy roots. Leaves are heart-shaped or palmately lobed. Leaves and tubers vary in size, shape, and color based on cultivar.

Uses: Food; ornamental value; dyes; animal fodder; biofuel.

Harvest: Year-round in the tropics and subtropics.

Flower: The sympetalous flowers are off-white with a purple tinge in the middle.

Tolerance: Moderate drought tolerance and cold tolerance. Tolerates poor soils, but has issues with nematodes in alkaline soils. Requires well-draining soils.

General Description: Sweet Potato is a herbaceous perennial vine and groundcover that features beautiful flowers and large, starchy roots. Leaves are heart-shaped or palmately lobed. Leaves and tubers vary in size, shape, and color based on cultivar. The leaves and shoots of some cultivars can be eaten raw, although they are usually cooked. Tubers can be eaten after they are cooked thoroughly.

- **Native Origin:** Tropical America.
- **General History:** Sweet Potato is probably native to Central America where it was domesticated around 5,000 years ago, although there is evidence that it was grown in South America as far back as 8,000 BC. By 2,500 AD, Sweet Potato could be found growing throughout the Caribbean and South America, and by 1,000 AD Sweet Potato was growing throughout Polynesia. By 500 AD, Sweet Potato could be found in Hawaii, New Zealand, and throughout Southeast Asia. Today, Sweet Potato is one of the most important crops worldwide.



- **Distribution:** Tropics and subtropics worldwide. Grown as annuals in temperate regions.
- **Season of Harvest:** Year-round in the tropics and subtropics. Summer months in temperate climates. Tubers are usually harvested in fall and replanted in spring in temperate climates.
- **Culinary Uses:** Sweet Potatoes are featured in many different cuisines worldwide and commonly eaten for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and dessert. There are numerous Sweet Potato cultivars of various shapes, tastes, and colors. Cultivars with red or orange flesh tend to be dry and sweet, whereas cultivars with white or yellow flesh are usually moist and less sweet. The FGCU Food Forest has featured multiple cultivars during its lifetime. Sweet potatoes can be cooked and prepared in many different ways.

Sweet Potato	
Scientific Classification	
Kingdom:	Plantae
(unranked):	Angiosperms
(unranked):	Eudicots
(unranked):	Asterids
Order:	Solanales
Family:	Convolvulaceae
Genus:	<i>Ipomoea</i>
Species:	<i>I. batatas</i>

Sources

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