

# Celebrating Thanksgiving with Local Sweet Potatoes

Source 12 varieties of local sweet potatoes from Steele Plant Company, Gleason, TN or George's Plan Farm, Martin, TN. Can you taste the difference?



## Sweet Potato Facts:

- Sweet potatoes were grown in Peru as early as 750 BC.
- The sweet potato is the 6<sup>th</sup> principal world food crop
- These tuberous roots are among the most nutritious foods in the vegetable kingdom. They are packed with calcium, potassium, and vitamins A and C.
- Sweet potatoes are actually roots, unlike regular potatoes which are underground stems.
- Sweet potatoes come in different colors and can be eaten in many ways including baked, steamed, boiled, mashed, microwaved, fried, pureed, raw or juiced.

## Focus questions:

1. What is the part of the plant that we eat?
2. What color is it?
3. How does it help our body?
4. Where does it originate?

## AT HOME ACTIVITIES

1. ART: Cut several potatoes in half. On the flat sides, draw and then carve simple patterns or designs into the potatoes. Put out a tray of washable paints and let your students dip the potatoes into the paint and make prints with them. If there's too much paint on the potato, the stamp will slip. Show the children how to carefully dab excess paint onto a scrap piece of paper before they print.
2. GROW your own sweet potato plant slips. Sweet potatoes grow from "slips". Slips are the green vines that grow out of a sweet potato when it sprouts. They are taken off and planted in the ground to create a new sweet potato plant.
  - a. Place a sweet potato in a glass jar of water. You want  $\frac{3}{4}$  to half of the sweet potato under water and the rest not. The part under water will grow roots and the part above water will grow sprouts (known as sweet potato slips). If your sweet potato is too skinny you can use toothpicks to keep it from falling right down into the jar of water.
  - b. Put the jar with the sweet potato somewhere WARM. Over 80 degrees Fahrenheit is ideal. And the warmer the better.
  - c. They might grow roots before they grow slips so check for those too. Slips will start growing out of it in anywhere from a week to two months.
  - d. Because sweet potatoes are the heat loving plants (they need warm soil and warm air to thrive) you can't put them out in the garden until it's warm out. If your sweet potato has plenty of slips but it isn't warm enough to plant them out yet, pull them off the sweet potato and let each slip root in water.
  - e. To care for your vines over the winter: place the container in indirect sunlight and watch for roots to develop within a few days. At this point, you can leave the container all winter, or you can pot them up and enjoy them as indoor plants until spring. If you decide to leave the cuttings in water, change the water if it becomes cloudy or brackish. Keep the water level above the roots. If you decide to pot the rooted cuttings, place the pot in a sunny spot and water as needed to keep the potting mix lightly moist, but never soggy.
  - f. When it is warm outdoors again, plant 1 slip per square foot. They can be planted with 1 foot between rows, but 16" is better if you have the room.
  - g. Harvest sweet potatoes before the first frost.

## Roasted Sweet Potato Wedges

1. Heat oven to 450 F.
2. Wash sweet potatoes.
3. Cut sweet potatoes in half, then cut each of the halves into four wedges (for each sweet potato, you will get eight wedges).
4. Put them onto a rimmed baking sheet and drizzled them with olive oil and then sprinkled them with salt, making sure all of the wedges are evenly coated.
5. Place into the preheated oven and roast until the potatoes are browned, crispy on the outside and fork tender on the inside, about 25 minutes. Remove from the oven and serve.



G N E J X U V A H V E O V U S  
 S W E E T P O T A T O E S T B  
 T R A C T O R N Z T Z M E F E  
 N I A O D D W L O R K E L A A  
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 M H K H A G I D I M Q L U E S

### SWEET POTATO CROSSWORD PUZZLE

- BEAUREGARD
- COVINGTON
- DIG
- FARMER
- ORLEANS
- ROOTS
- STEMS
- TRACTOR
- GLEASON
- PERU
- SLIPS
- SWEETPOTATOES
- MURASAKI
- PLANTS
- STEELEPLANTFARM
- TATERTOWN