

NEWS RELEASE
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A Sweet Harvest

It is time for the sweet potato harvest. It is the best suited vegetable for Kansas if you don't want to fuss over something. The only pest I have ever had was feeding from a deer. I planted the varieties Beauregard and Bonita.

Ornamental sweet potatoes grow well here too. They can be eaten but aren't selected for flavor like the typical sweet potato. The ornamental ones can be dug and stored for ornamentation next season.

The cooking type of sweet potatoes are dug now through the first frost. They are damaged by freezing temperatures. The vines can be cut away to make digging easier. Gently lift the roots out of the soil. The sweet potato skin is tender and easily damaged.

After digging, break the roots apart. Allow them to air dry in the garden for a few hours before picking them up. Gently place them in a container to transport to the house.

Curing the sweet potato will improve the flavor, seal over bruises and increase the length of time they will keep. Sweet potatoes are "cured" in a warm humid location for 1-2 weeks. Place them in an 80-90o F environment with high humidity for 7-10 days. Then lower the temperature to around 55o F for long-term storage.

Never allow temperatures to drop below 50o F as the flavor, quality, and dark colors will result. If sweet potatoes are washed before storing, make sure they are handled carefully and dried before curing. It is common for sweet potatoes to keep for four months or longer.

If you didn't get around to growing your own sweet potatoes, they should be readily available for purchase. Sweet potato roots are nutritious. One average sized root provides one-half the recommended daily allowance of vitamin C, twice the vitamin A, as well as significant amounts of calcium, iron, niacin and riboflavin. They also provide protein.

Enjoy the last part of the vegetable season with sweet potatoes.

You can find out more information on this and other horticulture topics by going to the Riley County, K-State Research and Extension website at www.riley.ksu.edu. Gregg may be contacted by calling 785-537-6350 or stopping by 110 Courthouse Plaza in Manhattan or e-mail: geyeston@ksu.edu.

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