

How to grow sweet potatoes – Part 2

The two most popular ways to grow sweet potatoes is to first grow your (what are known as) slips, either by suspending a sweet potato in water or laying the potato down on some damp compost. For more details on these methods please see my March blog/newsletter in the archive section on my website. www.foodgardening4all.co.uk

So, if you've been growing along you should have some sort of leaf growth starting to appear from your potatoes. You may have some roots growing as well, which is great. The idea is to wait until the vines have grown to at least about 4–5 inches long and then you can either snap or cut them off from the potato. These 'Slips' are then put into a jar of water to carry on growing until it's time to plant them outside.



Ideally what you are looking for is a vine with some roots. As mentioned, you can pop these in a jar of water, or you can pot them up until it's time to plant them outside. They will however be quite happy sitting in water and will carry on growing until the weather is warm enough for them to be planted out.



If you find you have lots of vines but no roots like I did on my compost grown potatoes, don't worry, that's fine too. Simply cut one of the vines just below a leaf node. You may see in the third picture



a few little bumps next to the stalk of the large leaf. This is where the roots will grow. Again, just pop them in a jar of water and in a few days roots will start to appear. It will be possible to make quite a few slips this way just by cutting below a leaf node and rooting them. You can see on the last picture the roots that have begun to grow from below the leaf node.

Once you have the required number of slips with nice, developed root systems on them you can think about planting them out.

Sweet potatoes are warm loving vegetables and should be planted when the soil has had a chance to warm up around about the end of May. It's a good idea to cover your slips in a bit of fleece for a few days to allow them to acclimatise to the change in temperature. They need a sunny spot and to be planted about 30cms apart.



I've found they grow very well in containers, but if you have the space they grow just as well in the ground. The vines will meander about, but I personally like to grow the vines up a trellis to save space.

As usual, if you have any food gardening questions just drop me an email and I'd love to hear how you got on with growing your own slips.

Christine