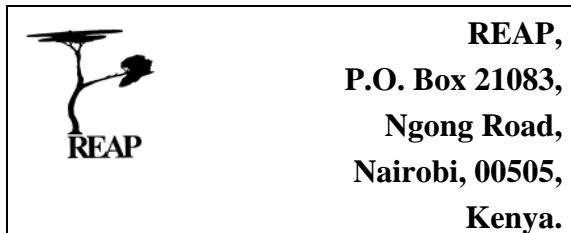


Ridges or mounds should be piled with the earth if there are cracks appearing or when rains have washed off the soil to stop weevils entering.

Sweet Potatoes and Stress

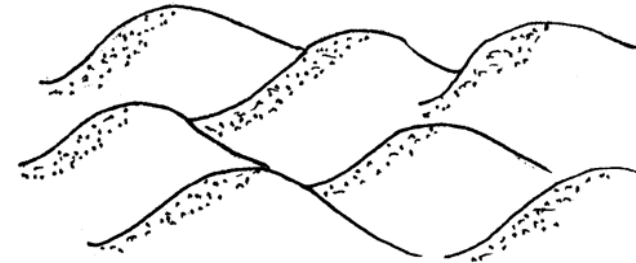
Sweet Potatoes produce tubers when they are stressed. They therefore produce better in harsher conditions. When sweet potatoes are intercropped with other taller crops or under trees as in agroforestry systems, they are often less stressed than when under full sunlight, and often produce only few tubers. In some situations when tuber formation is poor, the plants can be induced to produce tubers by stressing them. In some places thorn branches are dragged over sweet potato gardens to damage the leaves and encourage tuber formation by inducing stress.



PLANTING HEALTHY SWEET POTATOES

Sweet Potatoes do best in light sandy soils. Heavy, clay soils give poor development of tubers and are difficult to harvest. Digging the soil into ridges or mounds using a spade loosens the soil so that the tubers can develop and expand easily.

Planting on ridges is the best if many potatoes are to be grown while mounds are easier for family use.



Sweet Potatoes are normally planted from cuttings from the **vines** that develop from tubers left in the ground at the last harvest.

If you are going to get a good yield it is important to plant health cuttings. The most serious pest of the sweet potato is the sweet potato weevil. The **larvae** are like worms that make holes in the tubers and vines. The adults are small black beetles (weevils).

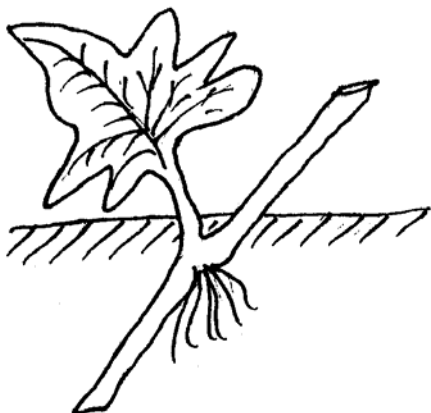


The vines should be selected and collected from the old field in order to avoid infected vines with holes made by sweet potato weevils. Sweet potatoes that are planted

early are mature before the beginning of the dry season so avoid the increase in sweet potato weevils when the soil cracks.

HOW TO PLANT SWEET POTATOES AS SHORT CUTTINGS

1. The vines should be selected when they are collected from the old field so that any showing disease or sweet potato weevil holes are rejected. Cuttings from the bases of the vine should be particularly carefully checked.



2. The vines should be cut into short lengths about 30-40 cm (one foot - 18") long. If there are many nodes the vines can be shorter. If there are fewer nodes the pieces need to be longer.

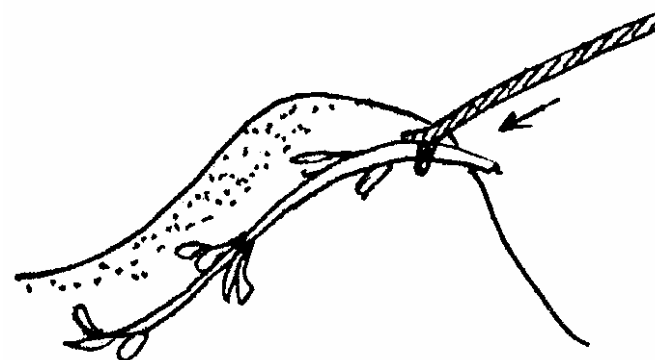
3. Store the cuttings for 2-3 days before planting, as this encourages root growth. They should be stored in the shade, and kept covered and moist.

4. The lower leaves need to be removed from the cuttings.

5. Only 5-6 cuttings should be planted in each mound. Cuttings should be about 30 cm (one foot) apart in a ridge.

6. The cuttings must be planted the right way up. Remember the bud is always above the leaf scar.

7. Use a forked stick to plant the cuttings. Plant by pushing near the lower end of the cutting - not near the middle. The stick is good because it gets the cuttings deep. At least two thirds of each cutting should be buried.



CARING FOR SWEET POTATOES AFTER PLANTING

Usually Sweet Potatoes grow quickly and when they are well established they smother the weeds. However before the vines develop enough to cover the ground it is important to weed between the plants to ensure good yields. Pruning can be done by removing the excessive leaves and the tender parts that can later be used for feeding livestock.