

Sweet Potato

GENERAL

- Origin : tropical
- Vigour : fast growing
- Humidity : semi-humid, very humid, extremely humid
- Propagation : layer, cuttings, division
- Maintenance : low

CONDITIONS

- Urban climate : resistant
- Dessication : vulnerable
- Stagnant water : vulnerable
- Irrigation : medium
- Salinity/ppm : low (1000 ppm)
- Hardiness : 0°C

SHAPE

- Type : perennial
- Height : 1.5 m
- Spread : 3 m-5 m
- Foliage : deciduous

FLOWER

- Colour : deep pink, lilac, purple, white
- Size : 8 cm - 10 cm
- Period : April - September

FRUIT

- Type of fruit : capsule
- Fruit size : 0.8 cm
- Toxicity : edible when processed, root

This vine produces edible tubers that can be oblong, round or even forked, and up to 25 cm long. Their skin may be white, yellow, red, brown or purple. Varieties with white flesh are firmer, while those with shades of orange are more nutritious, containing the vitamins A and C. Originally grown by Inca and Maya tribes in Central America, it was Columbus who began to distribute the plant. Nowadays, it is a staple food found in many tropical countries. It is eaten boiled, baked, fried, grilled or raw as a salad. Sweet Potatoes are also grown as pretty ornamentals for their attractive foliage, which is deeply lobed or heart-shaped. Cultivars show different colours such as purple, and are sometimes variegated. Flowers appear in shades of purple, pink or white from spring until autumn, but they are rather inconspicuous. Being of tropical descent, the plant revels in heat and full sun if the soil is fertile, well drained and not too dry. Although it may be grown from seed, it is usually propagated by softwood cuttings or tuber sections. Maintenance requirements are low, limited to training the shoots along the support. Pruning is possible at any time, and infestations by pests or diseases are rare. Sweet Potatoes become dormant during prolonged periods of cold, but remain evergreen in mild climates without frost. In Arriyadh, this plant is grown for its ornamental foliage, and large areas are often seen as a groundcover. It may also be planted in containers, hanging baskets or to hang over walls.

