

Rec April 1956

GROWING SWEET POTATOES IN THE WESTERN VALLEYS OF
RIVERSIDE COUNTY

Sweet potatoes are well adapted to Western Riverside County and under good management yields of 250 to 400 pound lugs of No. 1's and 75 to 100 lugs of No. 2's are not uncommon for the Jersey and Puerto Rico varieties. The Velvet and Key West varieties yield about 1/2 to 3/4 as much as the Puerto Rico and Jersey in similar situations but generally have a better market demand.

SOILS: Sandy soils are preferred for best root and plant development. Soils heavier than sandy loam are not desirable usually. Alkali soils should be avoided.

PLANTING:

Time: Field plantings start in mid to late April and should be completed by the first week of June for most varieties and by May 20th for the Jersey. Seed roots are planted in hot beds in March for production of slips.

Method: Following a final discing after pre-irrigation and fumigation, the land is ridged. Special planting equipment is often used containing a water reservoir tank for wetting the seedling ball of the transplants. Plant spacings vary according to grower preference and variety, 10,000 to 14,000 plants per acre is the range. Generally the Jersey is planted at a lower rate than Velvets, Puerto Rico or Key West. Row spacings vary from 36 to 40 inches. Plant spacings in the row also vary from 10 to 14 inches for Puerto Rico and 14 to 18 inches for the Jersey.

FERTILIZER: Eighty pounds of actual nitrogen per acre, usually from 200 pounds of sulfate of ammonia, is the standard application, generally half or all at planting and/or the other half side-dressed previous to the second crop irrigation.

IRRIGATION: Since sweet potatoes are generally grown on sandy soils, fairly frequent irrigations - about every 6 to 10 days - is the rule. They should not be allowed to suffer for lack of water during the growing period. Two to 2 1/2 acre feet of water per acre per crop usually suffices.

CULTIVATION: Cultivations are frequent - often after every irrigation. A certain amount of hand-hoeing is necessary also but less where effective machine cultivation has been used.

PEST CONTROL: Wire worms and nematodes are serious on sweet potatoes. The usual control is 4 to 5 gallons per acre of E.D.B. applied to the soil at least two weeks before planting.

Other diseases - black rot, stem rot and scurf are controlled by hill selecting disease free seed roots in the field and by crop rotation. Two years of sweet potatoes in a row on the same land is usually maximum.

HARVESTING, PACKING AND GRADING: Harvesting begins in September or October and is done either by a potato digger or by plowing out. Previous to digging a roto-beater or vine cutter is used. The remaining vines are picked off when the roots are picked up. The roots are picked up and boxed by hand for transportation to the packing shed.

Sweet potato grades for the Los Angeles market are arbitrary. Local usage calls for "No. 1's" and "No. 2's" and Jumbo. Grower experience has indicated a desirability for grading higher than actual grades for best movement into the market.

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WHAT DOES IT COST TO GROW SWEET POTATOES
IN THE WESTERN VALLEYS OF RIVERSIDE COUNTY?

Based on a marketable yield of 325 - 40% lugs (250 lugs U.S. #1's)

ITEM	SAMPLE COST		YOUR COST	
	Per Acre	Per 40% Lug	Per Acre	Per 40% Lug
<u>Land Preparation & Planting</u>				
Disc 2x (1 time after pre-irrigation)	\$ 3.00			
Plow 1x	4.00			
Spring-Tooth 1x	1.00			
Float 2 - 3 ways	3.00			
Furrow For Pre-Irrigation	1.50			
Pre-Irrigate (Labor)	1.25			
Fumigate with E.D.B. (material & application)	33.00			
Ridge	1.50			
Planting (3 men, 1 tractor, 2½ acres per day)	20.00			
TOTAL PREPARATION & PLANTING	\$ 68.25	\$.21		
<u>Cultural Labor & Field Power</u>				
Irrigate (Labor) 10x @ \$1.75	\$ 17.50			
Cultivate 7x (2.00 1st time \$1.50 after)	11.00			
Fertilize with 1 cultivation	2.00			
Hoing 3x	20.00			
TOTAL CULTURAL LABOR & FIELD POWER	\$ 50.50	\$.16		
<u>Materials (Pre-Harvest only)</u>				
Irrigation water 2 1/3 acre ft. @ \$12.00	\$ 28.00			
Plants 12,000 @ \$4.00 per thousand	48.00			
Fertilizer 80% Nitrogen	12.00			
TOTAL MATERIALS	\$ 88.00	\$.27		
<u>Cash Overhead</u>				
General Expense @ 5% of above	\$ 10.41			
Taxes	5.60			
Insurance and Miscellaneous	4.00			
TOTAL CASH OVERHEAD	\$ 20.01	\$.06		
PRE-HARVEST COST Except Rent	\$226.76	\$.70		
Rent (Estimate your own)	\$ 50.00	\$.15		
TOTAL PRE-HARVEST COST	\$276.76	\$.85		
<u>Harvest & Process</u>				
Dry, Pick, haul to shed	\$100.00	\$.31		
Pack 325 lugs @ 30¢ (plus 20¢ for lugs)	162.50	.50		
TOTAL HARVEST	\$262.50	\$.81		
TOTAL COST TO GROW, HARVEST AND PROCESS	\$539.26	\$1.66		
(Add brokerage commission of 15% of market price, and if marketed in Los Angeles, 15¢ per lug for trucking)				

NOTE: The above figures are at the contract rate.