

## Veggie Board Guide: Sweet Potatoes

**Name of the plant and part that is consumed:** All parts of the sweet potato plant are edible. Most commonly the sweet potato root is the known as the edible part however, the leaves and vines are edible as well. The leaves can be prepared in the same way that one would prepare spinach or turnip greens. They can be somewhat bitter tasting but are a great source a variety of vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants.



**History:** Sweet potatoes originated in South America. Native Americans were growing them when America was discovered by Columbus in 1492. It is believed that sweet potato seeds made the voyage across the oceans from South America to Polynesia on seaweed, being lodged in the wing of a bird and/or sweet potatoes directly sent by boat. Anthropologist have found remnants of sweet potatoes in Polynesia from about A.D. 1000 to A.D. 1100.

**Nutrition:** Sweet potatoes are high in antioxidants which help reduce the risk of chronic diseases. They are also rich in fiber and a good source of manganese. Sweet potatoes are a wonderful source of vitamin A when consumed with the skin. A medium sized sweet potato provides four times the recommended daily intake of vitamin A. Also, they are a source of vitamin C; a medium sized sweet potato provides 35 percent of your daily recommended amount.

### Planting & Harvesting:

Sweet potatoes are grown from slips. Slips are pieces of sweet potato that have sprouted.

1. Slips can be planted anytime after the last spring frost.
  2. Choose a location to plant sweet potatoes and till the well-drained, fertile soil.
  3. Create raised mounds of the tilled soil that are 6 to 8 inches high and about 12 inches wide.
  4. Plant the slips 12 to 18 inches apart and deep enough to cover the roots and about half of the stem.
  5. Once the slips are planted water them with a starter solution that is high in phosphorus. Keep them watered for several days. Keep the plants well-watered.
  6. About 3 to 4 months after planting the slips they will likely be big enough to harvest; they should be big enough for a meal. Another way to tell is if the edges of the leaves begin to turn yellow. You can also choose to leave them in the ground until the first frost.
- Once harvested the sweet potatoes need to be cured in order to have a sweet flavor. To cure sweet potatoes leave them in a warm place with high humidity for about 10 to 14 days.

**Where have you seen it?** Sweet potatoes are used in a variety of ways, they can be used as main dishes, side dishes, desserts, and drinks. Recently I have seen them as a main ingredient of chips and served mashed as a side dish.

**Fun Fact:** North Carolina is the #1 producer of sweet potatoes in the United States. More than 40% of the national supply comes from North Carolina.

### Recipe: Sweet Potato Coconut Ginger Energy Bites

Makes 12-15 bites

Total time 45 minutes

#### Ingredients:

- 1 cup cooked sweet potato
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup rolled oats
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup peanut butter
- 3 tbsp honey
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp ground ginger (can use  $\frac{3}{4}$  tsp for more ginger flavor)
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup unsweetened shredded coconut

#### Instructions:

1. Combine all ingredients in a large bowl and stir until well combined.

2. Place bowl in fridge to firm up (about 20 minutes).
3. Line baking sheet with parchment paper.
4. Remove dough and portion into snack-sized bites.
5. Gently roll bites into shredded coconut and place back in fridge for 15-20 more minutes (or the freezer for 10 minutes)
6. Remove from fridge and enjoy for a pre run snack!

Note: These will last up to a week in the fridge.

(Based on 14 servings) Calories: 105 Carbohydrates: 11 grams Protein: 3 grams Fiber: 2 grams Sodium: 37 mg Potassium: 146 mg

**Resources:**

<https://www.ncsweetpotatoes.com/usda-sweet-potato-nutritional-analysis/benefits-of-sweet-potato/>

<https://www.ncsweetpotatoes.com/recipe/sweet-potato-coconut-ginger-energy-bites-no-bake/>

<https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2013/01/22/169980441/how-the-sweet-potato-crossed-the-pacific-before-columbus>

<http://www.ncagr.gov/agscool/teacher/commodities/swtpot.htm>

<https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/edible/vegetables/sweet-potato/are-sweet-potato-leaves-edible.htm>

<https://www.almanac.com/plant/sweet-potatoe>