



Planting the seedling

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## Sweet Potato: A starter guide

ARDC Bajo with pictures by ICTD



### Nursery raising

1. Raise the nursery beds of 20 cm high, 1 m wide and of a convenient length. Place the sweet potatoes with 30 cm between the row and 40-50 cm between the plants.
2. Give the nursery bed general care such as irrigation, top-dressing, weeding and so on.
3. Cut the stem every 6-7 leaf and produce the seedlings one day before the planting. And then, make the seedlings the same direction and tie up the seedlings lightly.



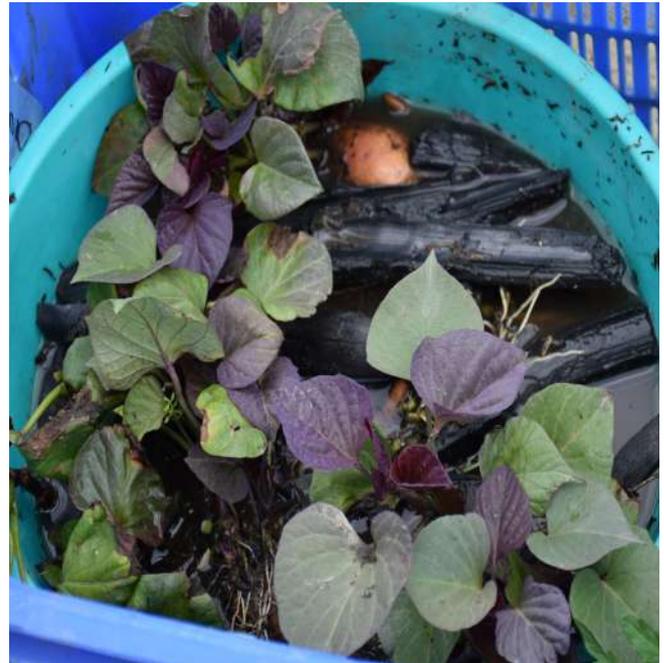
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## Cont...on from 1

### Seedling preparation

1. After the cutting, the seedling shows latex dripping from the cut end. Keep 1 to 2 hours as it is, and check whether it is dried or not. It is for prevention of some disease.
2. Prepare a wash tab poured water to a depth of 3-4cm. Stir with 1 handful of bio char. Soak the bottom end of the seedling in water and wait for 1 day.
3. One day after the soaking, a radicle (small root) comes out on a stem knot. Two days later, the radicle grows to a familiar root. This like root is very fragile and easy to come off when planting in soil. Therefore, one day soaking is recommended for the plant health.



### Planting bed

Prepare a bed of 40 cm by 30 cm. Dig the bed of 20 cm deep and apply mix of biochar, plant ash, bokashi and compost in it.



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Cont...on from 2

### Planting the seedling

Lay the seedling on the bed, cover soil on 3-4 nodes and the tubers come out from each nodes. Therefore the nodes must be under ground while planting. And there are two ways of the planting, sloped and round bottom:

**Sloped bottom** gives Good rooting with Regular number of tubers.

**Round bottom** gives Regular rooting with large number of tubers.



### Cultivation points

1. High quality sweet potato tubers are provided in soil with well drainage, low humidity, high organic compounds and less or moderately low nitrogen. River sand-based soil is preferable for the cultivation.
2. Over dose of nitrogen causes over growth of stems and poor growth of the tuber.
3. Sprinkling of plant ash is highly recommended for prevention of some diseases and to supplement potassium (K). Plant ash is easily available and very helpful. Just scatter it on the leaf.
4. Advanced technique of the Turning Over: New roots growing on stems always inhibit the tubers' growth. Turn the stems over and snap the roots from the growth.

### Destructive pest: Sweet potato weevil

This weevil originated in southern Asia, provides destructive damage to the tubers through exposed roots and stems. The damaged tubers have terribly bitter taste and no marketable value.



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## Cont...on from 3 Management

Remove the roots & tubers !

1. Clean up all tuber residues and host plants with roots as the nest.
2. Set up a canal around the field to prevent the pest from moving.
3. Plant the pest-free promised seedlings.
4. Protect the bottom of the stem by earthing up.
5. Apply an insecticide by soil drenching if you can.



## Postharvest - the cooking & the storage

1. Do not keep tubers in a refrigerator. They will spoil soon.
2. When storing tubers for long term, Do not wash the tubers.
3. Do wash up the tubers just before cooking.

**For cooking**, after the harvest store it in 13-16°C for 14-90 days and after that you can wash and cook.

**For underground storage**, prepare a pit and lay plastic sheet underneath and put straw on top of it. You can now store the potatoes. After 6-7 months it can be planted for next season.



## Leisure

### Remarkable characteristics of Sweet potato

1. Sweet potato plant requires high temperature and strong sunlight for proper growth. The best is around 20-30°C.
2. Sweet potato tuber requires potassium (k) from plant ash and long hours of sunlight for enlargement of the tubers.
3. Prohibit over dose of N (UREA) application strictly. It just assists the stem growth and dose not for fat tubers.
4. Very weak in paddy soil. Do not stagnate water in the planting field. Use high ridges manage wet condition.
5. Sweet potato plant has a less risk of continuous cropping disorder.
6. The tuber soon after the harvest is not so delicious. Please see “Postharvest” on the back side of this leaflet for the detail.
7. There is a destructive pest, “Sweet potato weevil”.

## JOKES



Are you growing sweet potatoes this year?

Answer: Yes, I yam!

How do you describe an angry sweet potato?

Answer: Boiling Mad

What did one sweet potato say to the other?

Answer: Wow! I yam impressed!

What do you say to an angry baked sweet potato?

Answer: Anything, just butter him up.

What does a British sweet potato say about a sunny day?

Answer: It's mashing

What kind of girlfriend does a potato want?

Answer: A sweet potato.

Why was the sweet potato too shy to ask out the russet potato?

Answer: Because he was a real spud.

*Did you know?*

*Vitamin C&E, dietary fiber, potassium, etc. are rich in baked sweet potato*

**Please submit your articles for RNR-Newsletter at**

*communication@moaf.gov.bt*



## The Ministry's week

### Agriculture Secretary visits Bumthang



The Hon'ble Agriculture Secretary, Dasho Thinley Namgyel visited Bumthang on 27-28 October. On October 27, Dasho visited Wobthang Organic Wonders (WoW) farm in Tang gewog. On the morning of October 28, Dasho met with the RNR staff including the sector and regional heads among others. The meeting discussed briefly on mandates, achievements, issues and challenges for different

sectors. In the afternoon, Dasho visited the RNR offices such as National Equine Research and Development Centre, National Seed Centre, Central Machinery Unit, National Highland Research and Development Centre, National Research and Development Centre for Animal Nutrition, Regional Cattle Breeding Centre and Ugyen Wangchuck Institute for Conservation and Environment Research.

### Hon'ble Secretary visits FMCL site at Trongsa

The Hon'ble Secretary, Dasho Thinley Namgyel made a brief visit to commercial farms at Phaitang and Wangray. The farms were established in 2020 with financial support from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests.

The Phaitang farm was established in April 2020 on an area of 50 acres and has 9 working staff. There



are 54 (5m x 10m) greenhouses currently growing tomatoes. It has already marketed more than 1000 kgs of tomatoes to schools and local vendors in Trongsa.

Other vegetables include beans which have started fruiting while cauliflower and broccoli are in the transplanting stage. The farm aims to produce winter vegetables.

### New Director for Department of Agriculture

Yonten Gyamtsho has been appointed as the new Director for the Department of Agriculture. Prior to the post, he was the Chief Marketing Officer.

He started his civil service career in 1999 as a Dy. Fodder Officer in Bumthang. Between the years 2001-2011, he served as a Lab Manager in Paro, the Extension Program Officer in Wangdue

and the Dzongkhag Agriculture Officer in Punakha. He also served as a Trade Attaché at the Royal Bhutanese Embassy in Dhaka.

He holds a M.Sc. in Plant Biotechnology from the University of London and a degree of B. Sc. Agriculture from the Marathwada Agriculture University, India.



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