



YOUTH GARDENING IN TENNESSEE: **TEN FAVORITE PLANTS FOR YOUTH GARDENERS IN TENNESSEE**

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Photo Credit: Emily A. Gonzalez

Now that you've learned about setting up your garden and keeping your crops watered, it's time to learn more about your plants! The following 10 crops are good choices for Tennessee youth gardeners.

Arugula

WHAT IS ARUGULA?

Arugula (*Eruca sativa*) is a green, leafy vegetable that is also sometimes known as garden or salad rocket in other countries. It is in the cabbage family, so it is related to kale, bok choy, mustard greens and collard greens.

PLANTING AND HARVESTING

Arugula is considered a cool-season vegetable and prefers growing in the cooler seasons of spring and fall here in Tennessee. It can withstand mild frosts and can be planted directly from seed in February and March for spring production. To provide a fall harvest, arugula seeds can be sown in August or early September.

Arugula is ready to harvest after about five to eight weeks. Time to harvest can vary according to the time of year or preferred leaf size. Arugula can be harvested as a baby leaf or a more mature leaf. It can be eaten raw or cooked. As with other leafy green vegetables, arugula can be harvested by cutting up to one-third of the outer leaves at a time for a continual harvest. In general, as arugula leaves mature, they will take on a rich nutty flavor. As the weather warms in the spring, arugula leaves will also tend to take on a spicier flavor.

SUMMARY OF GROWING TIPS

LIGHT	Full sun/part shade
SOIL CONDITIONS	Prefers rich, humus soil with pH of 6 to 6.8
PLANTING DATES	Sow seeds in March and August to early September
DAYS UNTIL HARVEST	About 40 days to maturity
SPACING	Sow seeds 6 inches apart
PLANTING DEPTH	Sow seeds ¼ inch deep

WHY WE LIKE ARUGULA

Arugula is one of those super plants that grows well in rich soil from seed in the spring and fall of Tennessee, requiring minimal care and attention. It also grows quickly, making it a perfect choice for growing with youth gardeners. Arugula has a rich and unique flavor, is nutritious, and can be harvested in various stages. Try growing arugula and you'll see why we like it. Not only will the kids like growing this veggie, they'll also love saying the name!

NUTRITION HIGHLIGHTS

Arugula is high in vitamin K, which helps your blood clot.

1 cup of arugula (raw) contains:

- Calories = 5
- Vitamin K = 24 percent of daily target



Mini Bell Pepper

WHAT IS A MINI BELL PEPPER?

Mini bell peppers (*Capsicum annuum*) are sweet, mild-flavored peppers. Mini bell peppers come in many colors like green, yellow, orange and red. Green peppers are immature fruit and the various red, yellow and orange colors of different varieties signal full maturity.

PLANTING AND HARVESTING

Mini bell peppers are warm-season plants and will be killed by frost, so plan to have your peppers mature before the average first frost comes in your area. You'll also want to plant your peppers after the average last frost date if growing in the spring. Check with your county Extension agent for information on local first and last frost dates.

Peppers are usually grown as transplanted seedlings in Tennessee, and, depending on the variety, will mature within 55-80 days. Mini bell peppers can often mature within 55 days because they are smaller in size than standard bell peppers. After they begin fruiting, bell peppers can usually be harvested for at least 2-3 months, until the first frost. As with cherry or grape tomatoes, we find that growing smaller varieties of peppers can lead to earlier harvest and more individual fruit for the youth gardener to enjoy. More rapid fruit maturity of the small-fruited cultivars may also reduce disease and insect losses that can occur while larger fruits are maturing.

SUMMARY OF GROWING TIPS

LIGHT	Full sun
SOIL CONDITIONS	Well-drained
PLANTING DATES	May or June
DAYS UNTIL HARVEST	55 to 80
SPACING	Transplant seedlings 18-24 inches apart

WHY WE LIKE MINI BELL PEPPERS

Bell peppers grow well from transplants in the spring and summer of Tennessee, requiring minimal care and attention. Smaller fruiting varieties produce an abundant and continuous harvest throughout the summer and fall here in Tennessee and usually have fewer problems from pests and diseases. Kids love the smaller size and taste of these sweet bell peppers as well! Youth gardeners love eating them individually or as part of a salad. They're also delicious in salsa or as part of a stir fry

dish. The continual harvest and practical uses of this tasty and nutritious veggie are sure to make it a hit!

NUTRITION HIGHLIGHTS

Mini bell peppers are very high in vitamin A. Vitamin A helps form and maintain healthy skin, teeth, skeletal and soft tissue, mucus membranes, and skin. It also promotes healthy vision.

Mini bell peppers are high in vitamin B6. Vitamin B6 helps your body make antibodies, which are needed to fight many diseases. It also helps your body maintain normal nerve function, make hemoglobin, break down proteins from foods, and keep blood sugar within normal ranges.

Mini bell peppers are high in vitamin C. Vitamin C is needed for the growth and repair of tissues in all parts of your body, including skin, teeth and bones.

Mini bell peppers are high in vitamin E. Vitamin E helps your immune system battle against viruses and bacteria and is important in the formation of red blood cells.

Mini bell peppers contain 3 grams of fiber. Fiber is good for your digestive tract and heart. It slows down the absorption of carbohydrates, which may help prevent peaks and valleys in blood sugar levels, reducing the onset risk for type 2 diabetes. Fiber also helps your gut recognize when you're full.

Mini bell peppers high in folate. Folate helps tissues and cells work. Our bodies need folate to make DNA and for cell division.

Green peppers contain lutein, which works with another chemical, zeaxanthin, found in corn, spinach and red pepper to help keep eyes healthy.

1 cup of chopped bell pepper contains:

- Calories = 46
- Dietary fiber = 3 g
- Vitamin A = 33 percent of daily target
- Vitamin B6 = 33 percent of daily target
- Vitamin C = 254 percent of daily target
- Vitamin E = 16 percent of daily target
- Folate = 17 percent of daily target
- Riboflavin = 12 percent of daily target
- Niacin = 10 percent of daily target



Bok Choy

(Bok Choi or Pac Choi)

Photo Credit: Emily A. Gonzalez

WHAT IS BOK CHOY?

Bok choy or Pac choi (*Brassica rapa var. chinensis*) is a leafy green vegetable with sturdy white stalks that do not form a head. Native to China, bok choy has been cultivated for at least 2,000 years. Chinese or Napa cabbage is closely related (*Brassica rapa var. pekinensis*) but forms a head as it matures.

PLANTING AND HARVESTING

Bok choy is a cool-season vegetable that can be direct seeded or transplanted in the spring or fall in Tennessee. Bok choy is a vegetable that grows quickly in rich soil with at least an inch of rainfall per week, and it can be ready for harvest within 4 to 8 weeks of transplanting! Timing of harvest will depend on the season, growing conditions and cultivars. A cultivar is a plant variety that has been produced in cultivation by selective breeding. Some cultivars are suitable for harvesting at a baby stage, such as the baby bok choy shown on the next page. Cultivars that grow to be larger, such as ‘Joi choi’ Bok Choy, pictured above, will produce mature stalks that can be removed from the outer portion of the plant, allowing the inner stalks to expand and continue growing. When planting in spring, be sure to plant bok choy early enough so that it doesn’t bolt, producing flowers and growing bitter because of hot weather. In the fall, try to plant bok choy after the heat of summer has passed. Baby bok choy can be harvested easily before bolting occurs, as it matures quickly in just 30 days.

SUMMARY OF GROWING TIPS

LIGHT	Full sun/part shade.
SOIL CONDITIONS	Well-drained, fertile soil high in organic matter, pH 6.0-7.5.
PLANTING DATES	For larger, longer maturing varieties, start transplants inside 4-6 weeks before last frost date. Set out transplants in March or September.
DAYS UNTIL HARVEST	Up to 50 days until harvest from seed or 4 weeks from transplant.
SPACING	Transplant 6-12 inches apart in rows 18-30 inches apart. Use the closer spacings for smaller cultivars.

WHY WE LIKE BOK CHOY

Because of climate similarities between parts of China and Tennessee, bok choy will grow vigorously and with minimal pest problems in fertile soil and with adequate moisture. Bok choy grows well from transplant here in the spring and fall of Tennessee, grows quickly, and has a mild flavor, making it a perfect choice for youth gardeners. It can be harvested when young or grown to maturity producing sizable crops when it’s mature. Bok choy can also be grown for a continual harvest. Not only is bok choy a fast and prolific grower with minimal pest pressure in Tennessee, it also tastes delicious in something like a stir fry! Kids will like growing and eating this nutritious veggie as much as they’ll love saying its name.

NUTRITION HIGHLIGHTS

Bok choy is high in vitamin A. Vitamin A helps form and maintain healthy skin, teeth, skeletal and soft tissue, mucus membranes, and skin. It also promotes healthy vision.

A host of proud youth gardeners harvest baby bok choy, 'Shiro,' with help from Tennessee Extension Master Gardener.



Bok Choy (continued)

Photo Credit: Emily A. Gonzalez

Bok choy is high in vitamin B6. Vitamin B6 helps your body make antibodies, which are needed to fight many diseases. It also helps your body maintain normal nerve function, make hemoglobin, break down proteins from foods, and keep blood sugar within normal ranges.

Bok choy is high in vitamin C. Vitamin C is needed for the growth and repair of tissues in all parts of your body, including skin, teeth and bones.

Bok choy is high in folate. Folate helps tissues and cells work. Your body needs folate to make DNA and for cell division.

Bok choy is high in vitamin K, which helps your blood clot.

Bok choy contains the mineral calcium. Calcium is beneficial for strong bones and teeth.

1 cup of bok choy (cooked with salt and vegetable oil) contains:

- Total calories = 77
- Calcium = 15 percent of daily target
- Potassium = 11 percent of daily target
- Vitamin A = 36 percent of daily target
- Vitamin B6 = 23 percent of daily target
- Vitamin C = 55 percent of daily target
- Vitamin K = 76 percent of daily target
- Folate = 19 percent of daily target

NUTRITION SOURCES:

m.supertracker.usda.gov/foodtracker.aspx

fnic.nal.usda.gov/food-composition/vitamins-and-minerals



Cherry Tomato

WHAT IS A CHERRY TOMATO?

A cherry or grape tomato (*Solanum lycopersicum*) is a small fruit in the tomato (*Solanaceae*) family. The part of a plant that has the seeds in it is considered the fruit of the plant, although most people think of tomatoes as vegetables. A cherry tomato is the size of a cherry, but some can be as big as a golf ball. Cultivation of the cherry tomato is believed to go as far back as Aztec Mexico around the 15th century, but the plants weren't grown in the U.S. until the 20th century.

PLANTING AND HARVESTING

Cherry tomato is a warm-season crop and will be killed by frost, so plan for it to mature before the average first frost comes in your area. You also will want to plant your tomatoes after the average last frost date if growing in the spring. Check with your county Extension agent for information on local first and last frost dates.

Cherry tomatoes are ready to harvest when they are full color and firm, between 8 and 11 weeks after planting, depending on the variety. Harvesting can continue until the first frost. Adequate staking can help the plant stand upright and make harvesting easier.

SUMMARY OF GROWING TIPS

LIGHT	Full sun
SOIL CONDITIONS	pH between 6.0 and 6.5
PLANTING DATES	Mid-April to mid-June
DAYS UNTIL HARVEST	About 60 from seed and less for transplants
SPACING	24 inches between plants
PLANTING DEPTH	Sow seeds 1/8 inch deep. Set tomato transplants in the ground, covering the stems so that only two or three sets of true leaves are exposed.

WHY WE LIKE SMALL TOMATO VARIETIES

With adequate water and soil, small fruiting varieties like grape or cherry tomatoes grow well from transplants in the spring and summer of Tennessee. Smaller fruiting varieties produce an abundant and continuous harvest throughout the summer and fall until the first frost, with minimal problems from pests and diseases. Kids love the smaller size and taste of these sweet, small varieties and love eating this nutritious fruit individually or as part of a salad. Cherry tomatoes are also delicious in salsa and can be used in a variety of other nutritious dishes. The continual harvest and many practical uses of this tasty and nutritious veggie are sure to make it a hit!

NUTRITION HIGHLIGHTS

Cherry tomatoes are high in vitamin C. Vitamin C is needed for the growth and repair of tissues in all parts of your body, including skin, teeth and bones.

½ cup of cherry tomatoes contains:

- Total calories = 13
- Vitamin C = 13 percent of daily target



Chives

WHAT ARE CHIVES?

The chive plant (*Allium schoenoprasum*) is a member of the onion family. Chives can be eaten raw or cooked. They are vegetables used to flavor food and serve as a garnish to make food look delicious!

PLANTING AND HARVESTING

Though chives grow best in rich soil, they can be grown easily as a perennial in a variety of soil conditions throughout Tennessee. Reliably, they come back year after year with minimal care and attention. In rich soil with plenty of root space, chives will continue to grow and expand each year, meaning more to harvest in subsequent years. Chives can be transplanted easily in the spring or fall. Once mature, chives can be harvested multiple times. They can be cut back to at least 2 inches tall, and they will grow back so you can harvest them again. Avoid harvesting just the tips or they won't regrow properly.

WHY WE LIKE CHIVES

Chives are easy to grow in Tennessee and will come back reliably year after year because they are perennial. Chives can be eaten raw or cooked and have many uses as a garnish or for flavoring in soups, salsas and dips and can be used in just about any other dish where onion flavoring is welcomed. In addition to being flavorful, chives produce a beautiful, edible pink to purple blossom in spring.

SUMMARY OF GROWING TIPS

LIGHT	Full sun
SOIL CONDITIONS	Well drained with a pH of 6.0-7.0
PLANTING DATES	Plant rooted clumps in spring after frost danger has passed
DAYS UNTIL HARVEST	30 days from transplant
SPACING	6-12 inches apart



Kale

Photo Credit: Emily A. Gonzalez

WHAT IS KALE?

Kale (*Brassica oleracea* var. *sabellica*) is a green leafy vegetable and is a member of the cabbage family. It is very popular in northern Europe and was so popular in Scotland that being invited to “come to kale” was an invitation to dinner.

PLANTING AND HARVESTING

Kale is a cool-season vegetable and can be planted in the spring and/or fall depending on the variety. Kale grows easily from seed in both seasons. For a spring crop, seeds should be planted in February or March so that the plant has enough time to mature before bolting (producing a flower) in the late spring and early summer heat. For a fall harvest, sow seeds in late summer and provide plenty of water while it is getting established. Kale leaves can be harvested at the base when leaves are young and tender or fully mature. Plant it at weekly intervals for a continuous harvest. Just be sure to harvest kale before it bolts to prevent a bitter flavor from setting in.

SUMMARY OF GROWING TIPS

LIGHT	Full sun
SOIL CONDITIONS	Well-drained, fertile soil high in organic matter, pH 6.0-7.5
PLANTING DATES	Feb.-March or July 1-Sept. 15
DAYS UNTIL HARVEST	50 to 65, depending on cultivar
SPACING	12-15 inches
PLANTING DEPTH	Plant seeds ¼ to ½ inch deep

WHY WE LIKE KALE

In Tennessee, kale grows well from seed in spring and fall and can be harvested continually throughout the season. Kale can be ready to harvest young or fully mature. We also like kale because it is delicious and exceptionally nutritious. A favorite in salads, kale can be eaten raw. It also can be steamed, sautéed or cooked and is a very versatile ingredient that can be used in many dishes, including soups.

NUTRITION HIGHLIGHTS

Kale is very high in vitamin A. Vitamin A helps form and maintain healthy skin, teeth, skeletal and soft tissue, mucus membranes, and skin. It also promotes healthy vision.

Kale is high in vitamin B6. Vitamin B6 helps your body make antibodies, which are needed to fight many diseases. It also helps your body maintain normal nerve function, make hemoglobin, break down proteins from foods, and keep blood sugar within normal ranges.

Kale is very high in vitamin C. Vitamin C is needed for the growth and repair of tissues in all parts of your body, including skin, teeth and bones.

Kale is exceptionally high in vitamin K. One serving of raw kale alone contains more than 500 percent of the daily recommended amount. Vitamin K helps your blood clot.

Kale is high in the mineral calcium. Calcium builds strong bones and teeth.

Kale is very high in the mineral copper. Copper works with iron to help your body form red blood cells. It also helps keep your blood vessels, nerves, immune system, and bones healthy.

Kale contains lutein, which works with another chemical, zeaxanthin, found in corn, spinach and red pepper to help keep your eyes healthy. That’s one reason to have a spinach and kale salad!

1 cup of kale (raw, chopped) contains:

- Calories = 33
- Calcium = 10 percent of daily target
- Copper = 112 percent of daily target
- Magnesium = 10 percent of daily target
- Vitamin A = 48 percent of daily target
- Vitamin B6 = 14 percent of daily target
- Vitamin C = 107 percent of daily target
- Vitamin K = 525 percent of daily target

NUTRITION SOURCES:

m.supertracker.usda.gov/foodtracker.aspx

fnic.nal.usda.gov/food-composition/vitamins-and-minerals



Leaf Lettuce

WHAT IS LEAF LETTUCE?

The term leaf lettuce describes the varieties of lettuce with leaves that branch from a single stalk in a loose bunch rather than forming a tight head. Leaf lettuce (*Lactuca sativa*) comes in different colors and varieties. For school gardens, we recommend green lettuce, which kids tend to favor over the red.

PLANTING AND HARVESTING

This cool-season vegetable can be planted in the fall or spring season depending on the variety you select. Leaf lettuce should be harvested when tender and mild flavored, before warmer weather causes flowering (bolting). Temperatures above 85 degrees may cause leaf lettuces to become bitter and bolt, so it is best to sow lettuce seeds as soon as possible in the spring. Waiting too long to harvest can also cause lettuce to become bitter in fall. Outer leaves can be harvested, as with other leafy green vegetables. In the school setting, children can harvest larger leaves early on, leaving the younger leaves to mature and be ready for a later harvest. This will allow for at least a couple of harvests during the fall or spring growing season.

SUMMARY OF GROWING TIPS

LIGHT	Yields best in full sun. Part shade helpful when it's hot.
SOIL CONDITIONS	Well-drained, pH 6.2-6.8
PLANTING DATES	Feb.-April or July 1-Sept. 15
DAYS UNTIL HARVEST	40-50, depending on cultivar; 2-3 weeks from transplant
SPACING	Thin seedlings to 6 inches apart
PLANTING DEPTH	Sow seeds 1/8 inch deep

WHY WE LIKE LEAF LETTUCE

Lettuce is also familiar to most people, so kids love it—especially bright green varieties like black seeded Simpson. Leaf lettuce makes for a delicious salad and can be prepared easily during a harvest celebration at the end of the school gardening season. Leaf lettuce also grows well in Tennessee during spring and fall and can be ready to harvest after about 8 weeks. Harvest can be continuous throughout the growing season under cooler conditions. Leaf lettuce is also nutritious.

NUTRITION HIGHLIGHTS

Leaf lettuce is high in vitamin A. Vitamin A helps form and maintain healthy skin, teeth, skeletal and soft tissue, mucus membranes, and skin. It also promotes healthy vision.

Leaf lettuce is very high in vitamin K, which helps your blood clot.

1 cup of lettuce contains:

- Calories = 8
- Vitamin A = 18 percent of daily target
- Vitamin K = 56 percent of daily target

NUTRITION SOURCES:

<https://m.supertracker.usda.gov/foodtracker.aspx>

<http://fnic.nal.usda.gov/food-composition/vitamins-and-minerals>



Radishes

Photo Credit: Emily A. Gonzalez

WHAT IS A RADISH?

A radish (*Raphanus*) is a round, colorful cool-season root vegetable that matures quickly and can be grown easily in the home or school garden in Tennessee. This veggie's greens can be eaten, too, either cooked or raw.

PLANTING AND HARVESTING

Radishes can be grown by seed in the spring and fall in Tennessee. They mature quickly, in about 4-6 weeks, and should be harvested when about the size of a golf ball, depending on the cultivar. A cultivar is a plant variety that has been produced in cultivation by selective breeding. Warmer temperatures can cause radishes to take on a spicy flavor, so if the weather is warm and you start to notice the radish emerging above the soil, plan to harvest it soon. Radishes can be stored in the refrigerator for up to a couple of weeks in a storage bag or container. You can harvest radishes throughout the growing season by planting at intervals of one or two weeks apart.

SUMMARY OF GROWING TIPS

LIGHT	Full sun/part shade. Yields best in full sun.
SOIL CONDITIONS	Well-drained
PLANTING DATES	Feb. 15-April 15
DAYS UNTIL HARVEST	25-30
SPACING	Sow seeds 1-2 inches apart
PLANTING DEPTH	Sow seeds ½ inch deep

WHY WE LIKE RADISHES

Radishes mature quickly and grow readily from seed. Kids love the bright color and visibility as radishes creep above the soil while they grow. They're also fun to harvest, and youth enjoy pulling them out of the ground. Youth enjoy comparing radish sizes and find gratification in harvesting them in such a short amount of time. They also enjoy eating them, especially with ranch dressing.



Strawberry

WHAT IS A STRAWBERRY?

Strawberry (*Fragaria x ananassa*) is a delicious red fruit that grows on a perennial plant, which means this plant will come back year after year while sending out new shoots as it grows.

PLANTING AND HARVESTING

An ideal time to plant strawberries in Tennessee is April. This gives new plants plenty of time to establish roots and harden off new growth before winter temperatures set in. Avoid planting strawberries in summer months when high temperatures cause heat stress. Strawberry plants tend to be shallow-rooted, so water them regularly in the absence of rain, especially during the first year. By the following spring, your strawberry plants will have sent out runners producing new plants. Every couple of years you'll want to renovate your strawberry planting. For information on renovating strawberry beds, please refer to UT Extension publication SP 284-B, "Renovating Strawberries in the Home Garden" (extension.tennessee.edu/publications/documents/SP284-B.pdf). Early fruiting strawberries, sometimes called June bearing, yield fruit in May in Tennessee, while ever bearing, also known as day neutral, varieties will bear smaller amounts of fruit throughout the summer growing season. For school gardens, we recommend using early fruiting varieties so that children can enjoy at least a partial strawberry harvest before the school year is over. 'Earliglow' is a popular variety renowned for its taste and excellent quality fruit.

Strawberries should be harvested once they are fully red. These fruits can be stored in the refrigerator for up to a week. Wait to wash them until just before eating, as strawberries washed before refrigeration will tend to decay more quickly. Strawberries also can be frozen easily. For freezing, choose berries that are firm and deep red, not soft, bruised or moldy.

SUMMARY OF GROWING TIPS

LIGHT	Full sun
SOIL CONDITIONS	Well-drained with a pH between 6.0 and 6.5
PLANTING DATES	Plant transplants in spring or fall
DAYS UNTIL HARVEST	Remove flowers the first year so no fruit is produced until the second year.
SPACING	2 feet apart, then let runners fill the bed the first summer.

WHY WE LIKE STRAWBERRIES

Strawberries, most kids will agree, are delicious. Given the right growing conditions, they produce a reliable harvest every year and can be harvested easily. Strawberries are also easy to store for an extended period of time, as they freeze well. Strawberries can be eaten with minimal preparation, are nutritious, and kids love to eat them. They go well in salads and can be incorporated into your harvest party that way as well!

NUTRITION HIGHLIGHTS

Strawberries are high in vitamin C. Vitamin C is needed for the growth and repair of tissues in all parts of your body, including skin, teeth and bones.

5 strawberries (raw, medium) contain:

- Calories = 19
- Total sugars = 3 g
- Vitamin C = 47 percent of daily target



Sweet Potato

Photo Credit: Emily A. Gonzalez

WHAT IS A SWEET POTATO?

The sweet potato (*Ipomea batata*) is a warm-season edible root, and in Tennessee it grows during the summer. It is typically orange colored on the inside but some cultivars are purple, red, yellow or even white. (A cultivar is a plant variety that has been produced in cultivation by selective breeding.) Sweet potato sizes also vary depending on the cultivar.

PLANTING AND HARVESTING

Grown during the warm season, sweet potatoes must be planted after the last frost in spring and will die off at the first frost in fall. They can be planted easily from slips, which are seedlings grown from eyes of the potato, and will grow all summer. Sweet potatoes can be harvested within 90 to 100 days and then stored in a refrigerator for up to a month. In school settings in Tennessee, sweet potatoes could be planted in May and left to grow throughout the summer for an early fall harvest. An inch of water per week is sufficient for this drought-hardy root vegetable. Although they will yield a larger harvest in fertile, well-drained soil, sweet potatoes also will grow in poor soil.

SUMMARY OF GROWING TIPS

LIGHT	Full sun
SOIL CONDITIONS	Well-drained, loamy to sandy soil
PLANTING DATES	May
DAYS UNTIL HARVEST	110-120
SPACING	Rows 3 feet apart with 8-12 inches between plants
PLANTING DEPTH	4 inches

WHY WE LIKE SWEET POTATOES

Sweet potatoes are an excellent choice for growing during the warm season and provide an abundance of produce, with an average sweet potato plant yielding about six potatoes per season. Both the roots and leaves are edible and nutritious! Sweet potatoes are drought hardy and grow well during the summer heat of Tennessee. Children also enjoy harvesting them in late summer/early fall when they return to school. Sweet potatoes are delicious, easy to cook and can be prepared in a variety of ways, both savory and sweet.

NUTRITION HIGHLIGHTS

Sweet potatoes contain beta-carotene, which is converted to vitamin A and helps maintain healthy mucous membranes and eyes.

Sweet potatoes and leaves are very high in vitamin A.

Vitamin A helps form and maintain healthy skin, teeth, skeletal and soft tissue, mucus membranes, and skin. It also promotes healthy vision.

Sweet potatoes are high in vitamin B6. Vitamin B6 helps your body make antibodies, which are needed to fight many diseases. It also helps your body maintain normal nerve function, make hemoglobin, break down proteins from foods and keep blood sugar within normal ranges.

Sweet potatoes are high in vitamin C. Vitamin C is needed for the growth and repair of tissues in all parts of your body, including skin, teeth and bones.

Sweet potatoes are high in vitamin E. Vitamin E helps the immune system battle against viruses and bacteria and is important in the formation of red blood cells.

Sweet potatoes are high in vitamin K, which helps blood clot.

Sweet potatoes are high in copper. Copper works with iron to help your body form red blood cells. It also helps keep blood vessels, nerves, and your immune system and bones healthy.

Sweet potatoes contain fiber. Fiber is good for your digestive tract and heart. It slows down the absorption of carbohydrates, which may help prevent peaks and valleys in blood sugar levels, reducing the onset risk for type 2 diabetes. Fiber also helps your gut recognize when you're full.

Sweet potatoes are a good source of carbohydrates, which your body uses for energy instead of having to break down protein. This allows proteins to be used as building blocks for muscles.

1 medium sweet potato (cooked with vegetable oil) contains:

- Calories = 154
- Carbohydrates = 20 g
- Dietary Fiber = 3 g
- Beta-carotene = 13.1 mg
- Copper = 12 percent of daily target
- Vitamin A = 125 percent of daily target
- Vitamin B6 = 14 percent of daily target
- Vitamin C = 19 percent of daily target
- Vitamin E = 13 percent of daily target
- Vitamin K = 12 percent of daily target

NUTRITION SOURCES:

lpi.oregonstate.edu/mic/dietary-factors/phytochemicals/carotenoids

m.supertracker.usda.gov/foodtracker.aspx

fnic.nal.usda.gov/food-composition/vitamins-and-minerals

ndb.nal.usda.gov/ndb/foods

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