



# Alabama 4-H Grows

Alabama Cooperative Extension System

**Sweet Potato Challenge  
Gardening Journal**

[www.aces.edu](http://www.aces.edu)



This garden journal is the property of \_\_\_\_\_

## Getting Started

Contact your county Extension office to register.

### Selecting a Gardening Site

**Step 1:** Make sure that it receives at least 6 to 8 hours of direct sunlight per day. If possible, select a site where the soil or growing medium is loose, such as a sandy loam. Or at least choose a site that has compost worked into the soil. If you are using a site with clay soil, work in more compost and create hills on which to grow the plants. It is also helpful to have a water source close by.

- Date completed: \_\_\_\_\_

**Step 2:** Make sure you have enough square footage for your garden.

If you are planting a **traditional garden**, space the plants 12 to 18" intervals with approximately 3 feet between the rows, as the vines will want to run. Use figure 1 to help you plan your garden (scale 1'x1'). This type of garden will require approximately 54 square feet (6'x9' area).

If you are going to use a **raised bed garden**, then you will not need an area as large. Use figure 2 to help you with your planning.

If you would like to try your hand at growing the sweet potatoes in a **container garden**, you will need six containers that measure at least 18" to 24" across (figure 3). The variety of sweet potato that we will be using for this project may not produce as well in a container garden, but do not be afraid to give it a try.

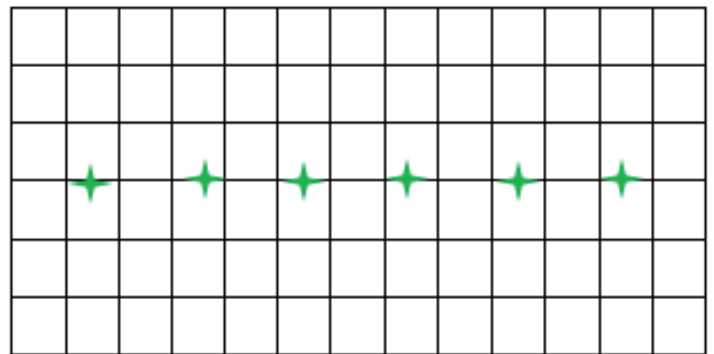


Figure 1. Traditional garden square footage.

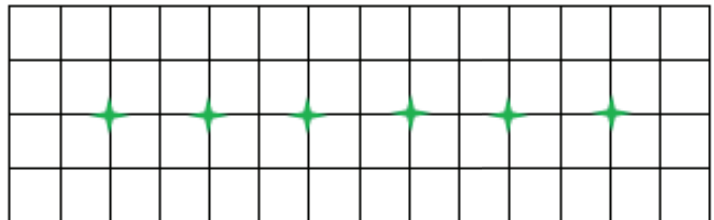


Figure 2. Raised bed garden square footage.



Figure 3. Container garden square footage.





**Step 3:** Select the type of garden you want to grow from the three garden choices. Place a check in front of the type chosen.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Traditional Garden:** A traditional garden is one in which you plant your sweet potatoes directly into the soil.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Raised Bed Garden:** A raised bed garden is one in which you construct a raised garden frame that is at least 6 inches higher than the surrounding soil. The bed is filled with a growing media, such as a vegetable garden soil mix from a local home and garden store.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Container Garden:** Because we will be using sweet potato slips from Bonnie Plants, the plants will be of the Beauregard variety. This variety grows best in a traditional or raised bed garden. If you want to try them in a container garden, make sure that each plant has a container at least 18 inches in diameter.

**Step 4:** After you have decided on your garden site, you will have to decide whether you need to conduct a soil test (optional).

A soil test will indicate how to provide your garden plants with the right types of nutrients for optimal plant development. The cost of the soil test is \$7, which is not covered by 4-H for this project. The following explains how to conduct a soil test if you decide to do one.

### Soil Test (optional)

**Traditional Garden:** If you are growing a traditional garden, you need to conduct a **routine analysis** soil test. *If the garden has been tested in the past three years, you may skip this test.* The cost for this test is not covered by 4-H for this project. To conduct the test, go to [www.aces.edu/blog/topics/forage-soil-testing/routine-soil-analysis](http://www.aces.edu/blog/topics/forage-soil-testing/routine-soil-analysis) and download the routine soil test form (Alabama Extension publication ANR-2307). The instructions for performing the test are on the form. When you have followed the instructions, return your sample to your county Extension office, and they will send it to the Auburn University Soil Testing Laboratory. You should receive the results in about two weeks after submitting the report.

Because you are soil testing a small area, the following formula will help you figure the percentage of an acre that you will be testing. This is important when you take the soil analysis and break it down for your area.

Square feet area of garden/43,560 of acres (square feet in acre) x 100 = % of an acre

Example: 54 square feet./43,560 = 0.001239 x 100 = 0.1239 % of an acre

**Raised Bed Garden:** If you are gardening in a raised bed garden filled with a commercial garden soil mix, you will not need to conduct a soil test this year. If the garden is three or more years old, then you will need to conduct a special soil test called a **special soil analysis**. When you access the form at [www.aces.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/SoilFormRevised.pdf](http://www.aces.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/SoilFormRevised.pdf), you will see that there are several choices. The only test you need is the S18 for home garden use in raised beds. The instructions for performing the test are on the form. When you have followed the instructions, return your sample to your county Extension office, and they will send it to the Auburn University Soil Testing Laboratory. You should receive the results about two weeks after submitting the report.

Because you are soil testing a small area, the following formula will help you figure the percentage of an acre that you will be testing. This is important when you take the soil analysis and break it down for your area.

Square feet area of garden/43,560 of acres (square feet in acre) x 100 = % of an acre

Example: 54 square feet/43,560 = 0.001239 x 100 = 0.1239 % of an acre



### Check one of the following:

\_\_\_\_\_ I did not conduct a soil test this year.

\_\_\_\_\_ I conducted the soil test this year and have included a copy of the soil test in my journal.

\_\_\_\_\_ I followed the soil test recommendations.

Date completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of soil test: \_\_\_\_\_

Date analysis received: \_\_\_\_\_

**Step 5:** Pick up your sweet potato plants from your county Extension office or from the designated pick-up site. **You will be contacted when it is time to pick up your plants.**

Date of delivery to you: \_\_\_\_\_

**Step 6:** Begin your Sweet Potato Challenge Project in the garden.

Date you planted and started your journal: \_\_\_\_\_





## Week 1

### Sweet Potato Challenge Begins

Date planted \_\_\_\_\_

Time of planting \_\_\_\_\_

#### Weather Conditions

Air temperature \_\_\_\_\_

Soil temperature \_\_\_\_\_

Soil moisture (check one of the following):

- ☐ Moisture visible at surface without moving soil.
- ☐ No visible signs of moisture in top 2 in. of soil.
- ☐ Signs of moisture visible at 3 in. or deeper.

#### Precipitation

Has there been any precipitation in the past 48 hours? How much? \_\_\_\_\_

Is any precipitation in the forecast for the next 48 hours? \_\_\_\_\_

Did you water the plants when you planted them?

\_\_\_\_\_

In the remaining space, tell us what you did and any observations you made during the planting of your sweet potatoes. Take a photo and attach it to this page.

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## Week 2

Complete at least one observation page each week during the project.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Weather Conditions

Air temperature \_\_\_\_\_

Soil temperature \_\_\_\_\_

#### Precipitation

How much precipitation has there been since you last visited the garden? \_\_\_\_\_

Is any precipitation in the forecast for the next 48 hours? \_\_\_\_\_

If you watered your plants, when did you water them? \_\_\_\_\_

In the remaining space, tell us what you did and any observations you made while checking on your sweet potatoes. Include any changes in the plants. Take a photo and attach it to this page.

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## Week 3

Complete at least one observation page each week during the project.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Weather Conditions

\_\_\_\_\_

Air temperature

Soil temperature

### Precipitation

How much precipitation has there been since you last visited the garden? \_\_\_\_\_

Is any precipitation in the forecast for the next 48 hours? \_\_\_\_\_

If you watered your plants, when did you water them? \_\_\_\_\_

In the remaining space, tell us what you did and any observations you made while checking on your sweet potatoes. Include any changes in the plants. Take a photo and attach it to this page.

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## Week 4

Complete at least one observation page each week during the project.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Weather Conditions

\_\_\_\_\_

Air temperature

Soil temperature

### Precipitation

How much precipitation has there been since you last visited the garden? \_\_\_\_\_

Is any precipitation in the forecast for the next 48 hours? \_\_\_\_\_

If you watered your plants, when did you water them? \_\_\_\_\_

In the remaining space, tell us what you did and any observations you made while checking on your sweet potatoes. Include any changes in the plants. Take a photo and attach it to this page.

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## Week 5

Complete at least one observation page each week during the project.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Weather Conditions

Air temperature

Soil temperature

### Precipitation

How much precipitation has there been since you last visited the garden? \_\_\_\_\_

Is any precipitation in the forecast for the next 48 hours? \_\_\_\_\_

If you watered your plants, when did you water them? \_\_\_\_\_

In the remaining space, tell us what you did and any observations you made while checking on your sweet potatoes. Include any changes in the plants. Take a photo and attach it to this page.

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## Week 6

Complete at least one observation page each week during the project.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Weather Conditions

Air temperature

Soil temperature

### Precipitation

How much precipitation has there been since you last visited the garden? \_\_\_\_\_

Is any precipitation in the forecast for the next 48 hours? \_\_\_\_\_

If you watered your plants, when did you water them? \_\_\_\_\_

In the remaining space, tell us what you did and any observations you made while checking on your sweet potatoes. Include any changes in the plants. Take a photo and attach it to this page.

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## Week 7

Complete at least one observation page each week during the project.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Weather Conditions

\_\_\_\_\_

Air temperature

Soil temperature

### Precipitation

How much precipitation has there been since you last visited the garden? \_\_\_\_\_

Is any precipitation in the forecast for the next 48 hours? \_\_\_\_\_

If you watered your plants, when did you water them? \_\_\_\_\_

In the remaining space, tell us what you did and any observations you made while checking on your sweet potatoes. Include any changes in the plants. Take a photo and attach it to this page.

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## Week 8

Complete at least one observation page each week during the project.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Weather Conditions

\_\_\_\_\_

Air temperature

Soil temperature

### Precipitation

How much precipitation has there been since you last visited the garden? \_\_\_\_\_

Is any precipitation in the forecast for the next 48 hours? \_\_\_\_\_

If you watered your plants, when did you water them? \_\_\_\_\_

In the remaining space, tell us what you did and any observations you made while checking on your sweet potatoes. Include any changes in the plants. Take a photo and attach it to this page.

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## Week 9

Complete at least one observation page each week during the project.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Weather Conditions

\_\_\_\_\_

Air temperature

Soil temperature

### Precipitation

How much precipitation has there been since you last visited the garden? \_\_\_\_\_

Is any precipitation in the forecast for the next 48 hours? \_\_\_\_\_

If you watered your plants, when did you water them? \_\_\_\_\_

In the remaining space, tell us what you did and any observations you made while checking on your sweet potatoes. Include any changes in the plants. Take a photo and attach it to this page.

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## Week 10

Complete at least one observation page each week during the project.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Weather Conditions

\_\_\_\_\_

Air temperature

Soil temperature

### Precipitation

How much precipitation has there been since you last visited the garden? \_\_\_\_\_

Is any precipitation in the forecast for the next 48 hours? \_\_\_\_\_

If you watered your plants, when did you water them? \_\_\_\_\_

In the remaining space, tell us what you did and any observations you made while checking on your sweet potatoes. Include any changes in the plants. Take a photo and attach it to this page.

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## Week 11

Complete at least one observation page each week during the project.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Weather Conditions

\_\_\_\_\_

Air temperature

Soil temperature

### Precipitation

How much precipitation has there been since you last visited the garden? \_\_\_\_\_

Is any precipitation in the forecast for the next 48 hours? \_\_\_\_\_

If you watered your plants, when did you water them? \_\_\_\_\_

In the remaining space, tell us what you did and any observations you made while checking on your sweet potatoes. Include any changes in the plants. Take a photo and attach it to this page.

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## Week 12

Complete at least one observation page each week during the project.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Weather Conditions

\_\_\_\_\_

Air temperature

Soil temperature

### Precipitation

How much precipitation has there been since you last visited the garden? \_\_\_\_\_

Is any precipitation in the forecast for the next 48 hours? \_\_\_\_\_

If you watered your plants, when did you water them? \_\_\_\_\_

In the remaining space, tell us what you did and any observations you made while checking on your sweet potatoes. Include any changes in the plants. Take a photo and attach it to this page.

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## Week 13

Complete at least one observation page each week during the project.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Weather Conditions

Air temperature

Soil temperature

### Precipitation

How much precipitation has there been since you last visited the garden? \_\_\_\_\_

Is any precipitation in the forecast for the next 48 hours? \_\_\_\_\_

If you watered your plants, when did you water them? \_\_\_\_\_

In the remaining space, tell us what you did and any observations you made while checking on your sweet potatoes. Include any changes in the plants. Take a photo and attach it to this page.

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## Week 14

Complete at least one observation page each week during the project.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Weather Conditions

Air temperature

Soil temperature

### Precipitation

How much precipitation has there been since you last visited the garden? \_\_\_\_\_

Is any precipitation in the forecast for the next 48 hours? \_\_\_\_\_

If you watered your plants, when did you water them? \_\_\_\_\_

In the remaining space, tell us what you did and any observations you made while checking on your sweet potatoes. Include any changes in the plants. Take a photo and attach it to this page.

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## Week 15

Complete at least one observation page each week during the project.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Weather Conditions

\_\_\_\_\_  
Air temperature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Soil temperature

### Precipitation

How much precipitation has there been since you last visited the garden? \_\_\_\_\_

Is any precipitation in the forecast for the next 48 hours? \_\_\_\_\_

If you watered your plants, when did you water them? \_\_\_\_\_

In the remaining space, tell us what you did and any observations you made while checking on your sweet potatoes. Include any changes in the plants. Take a photo and attach it to this page.

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## Week 16

Complete at least one observation page each week during the project.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Weather Conditions

\_\_\_\_\_  
Air temperature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Soil temperature

### Precipitation

How much precipitation has there been since you last visited the garden? \_\_\_\_\_

Is any precipitation in the forecast for the next 48 hours? \_\_\_\_\_

If you watered your plants, when did you water them? \_\_\_\_\_

In the remaining space, tell us what you did and any observations you made while checking on your sweet potatoes. Include any changes in the plants. Take a photo and attach it to this page.

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## Week 17

Complete at least one observation page each week during the project.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Weather Conditions

Air temperature \_\_\_\_\_

Soil temperature \_\_\_\_\_

### Precipitation

How much precipitation has there been since you last visited the garden? \_\_\_\_\_

Is any precipitation in the forecast for the next 48 hours? \_\_\_\_\_

If you watered your plants, when did you water them? \_\_\_\_\_

In the remaining space, tell us what you did and any observations you made while checking on your sweet potatoes. Include any changes in the plants. Take a photo and attach it to this page.

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## Week 18: Harvest

Harvest in mid to late September.

Date of harvest: \_\_\_\_\_

Carefully dig the potatoes trying not to cause damage. Once dug, allow the potatoes to dry for several hours in a shaded place. When dry, carefully brush them off and move them to a warm, dry, well-ventilated place for about 2 weeks, allowing them to cure and the skins to harden. When the potatoes are ready, an official weigh-in will take place at your county Extension office. You will be notified of the date for the weigh-in.

How many potatoes did you harvest from your six plants? \_\_\_\_\_

Weigh all of the potatoes, and record their total weight. \_\_\_\_\_

What would be the market value of your sweet potatoes at the rate of \$1.79 per pound?

\_\_\_\_\_

In this space, tell us what you did and any observations you made during the harvesting of your sweet potatoes. Take a photo and attach it to this page.

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