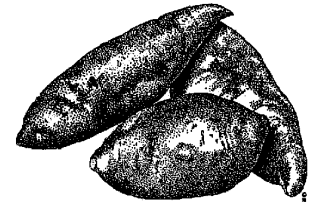




University of California Cooperative Extension

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SWEETPOTATO TIPS

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January 3, 2008

**COOPERATIVE
EXTENSION WORK IN
AGRICULTURE, HOME
ECONOMICS, AND 4-
H, U.S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE,
UNIVERSITY OF
CALIFORNIA, AND
COUNTY OF MERCED
COOPERATING.**

US SPC & NSPCG MEETINGS COMBINE

The United States Sweet Potato Council's Annual Meeting will be held January 20 - 22, 2008, at the Grove Park Inn Resort & Spa in Asheville, North Carolina (1-800-438-5800). This year, the National Sweet Potato Collaborators Group (NSPCG) will also be meeting at this location, on January 19 - 20 (all day Saturday and Sunday morning). Normally, the Collaborators Group meets with the Southern Region American Society of Horticulture Science meetings, but this year the location was changed so that growers, crop consultants, and allied industry could also attend the Collaborators meeting if they so desired.

The Collaborators meeting is all work and no play—scientific presentations, posters, and workgroup meetings take place. It is at this meeting that we decide the varieties for the Collaborators variety trial that I conduct each year, and which is so important to get new varieties for the California industry. This is your chance to see what kind of research is taking place in the United States that is specific to sweetpotatoes. Of course, it also gives the Collaborators Group the ability to interact directly with growers.

Check out www.sweetpotatoes.org for more information if you are planning on being in North Carolina this year.

Back to the convention--the hotel is sold out. Here are a couple of alternatives:

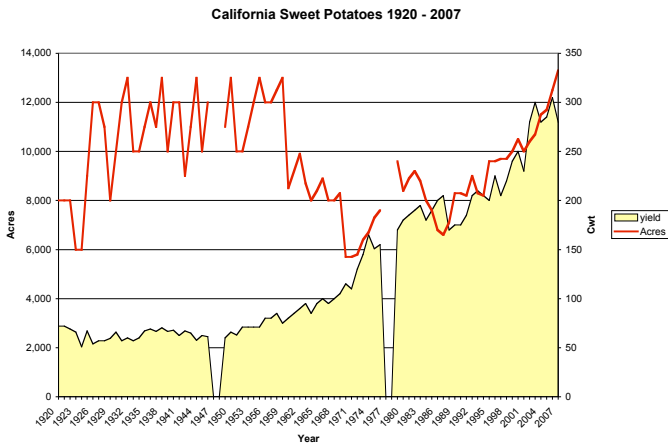
1. Homewood Suites
88 Tunnel Rd. (Hwy #70), Asheville, NC
(828)252-5400

Rates range in price from \$109.00 - \$129.00 per night. Also, they have a shuttle bus, and as I understand it, you can be shuttled from the Homewood Suites to the GROVE PARK INN for the Convention activities.
2. Renaissance Hotel
31 Woodfin St., Asheville, NC 28801
(828)252-8211
rates range in price from \$119.00 to \$149.00

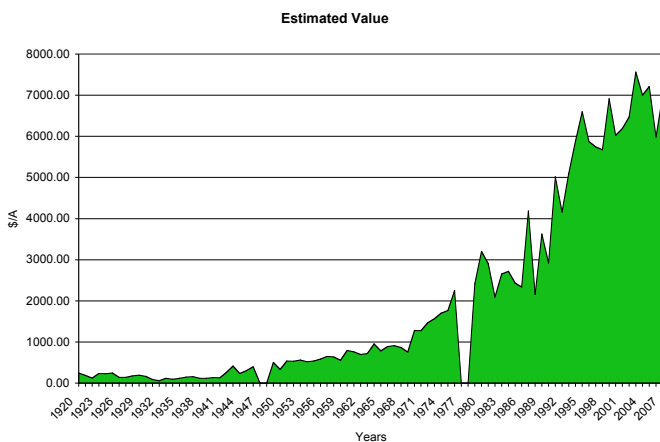
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PRODUCTION OVER THE YEARS

California sweetpotato acreage and production continues to increase. In 2007, we had the largest number of acres planted since 1959 based on USDA estimates. I estimate that yields are slightly down from last year, with an average 32 bins per acre, and so production will also be slightly less than 2006 at around 372 million pounds. But because price seems to be better this year, total value will be the greatest ever, around \$93.1 million, or \$7000 per acre.



California sweetpotato acres (line) and average yield since 1920. Acreage and yield have increased steadily since 1987.



California sweetpotato estimated value, \$ per acre, since 1920.

Status of Hanna ("Hanna Gold")

In light of recent changes in variety development in the sweetpotato marketing category, the Sweetpotato Council of California plans to drop their support of the virus-indexed mother plants of Hanna up at UC Foundation Plant Services. The variety costs the Council \$1000 in yearly maintenance fees and is little used anymore. Plants will be available to Council members in spring 2008, but not after that. Any who would like the Council to reconsider this position should contact a member of the Executive Board (Bob Weimer, Duane Hutton, or Aaron Silva), or they can contact me.



Hanna is virtually unplanted anymore in the state, is Golden Sweet (pictured) headed towards the same fate?

ESTIMATING HARVEST DATES

The following table may prove helpful in determining when your crop will be ready based on plant date. Additional time is needed for Golden Sweet and especially Murasaki-29.

Transplant date	Seed	No. 1's	Jumbos
	900 DD	1500 DD	1800 DD
April 15	July 5	Aug 5	Aug 23
May 1	July 10	Aug 11	Aug 29
May 15	July 16	Aug 17	Sept 5
June 1	July 26	Aug 28	Sept 17
June 15	Aug 4	Sept 8	Oct 2
July 1	Aug 18	Sept 28	not likely

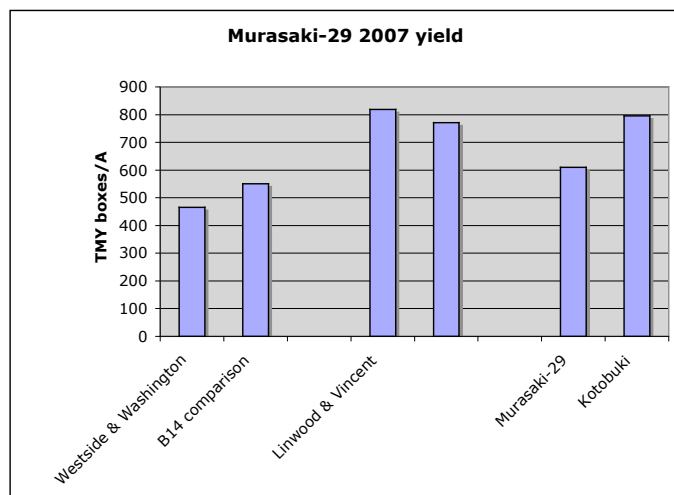
Based on cotton degree days (DD) with Beauregard and long-term weather data for Merced.

STATUS OF MURASAKI-29

Murasaki-29, the new Japanese-type yam released from LSU, did not yield that well in 2007. Though set seemed good, roots did not size well. It was rare for me to see a jumbo in my trials. Total yields average about 30 bins per acre, with only 6% jumbos. New, virus tested plants will be available for 2008, and I strongly encourage interested growers to try a *limited* amount of new plants before they throw in the towel on this one.

Probably Murasaki is impacted by the feathery mottle virus. All seed in Merced County is at least 4 years old, so virus-tested seed may increase production.

Getting plants will be different than in the past, however. Because this is a patented variety, you must purchase through licensed seed dealers just like with Covington. To become a licensed dealer, you

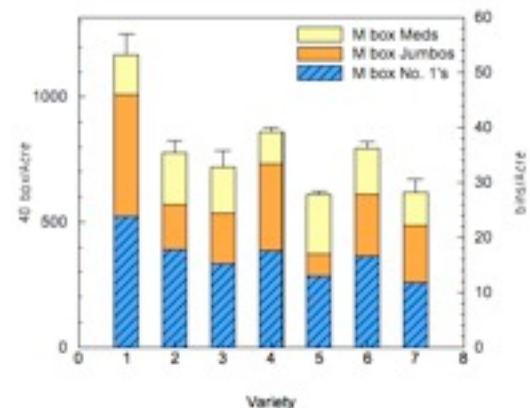
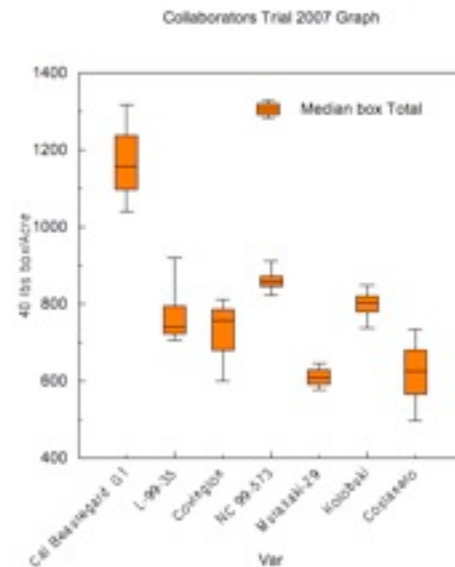


must pay \$2500 to LSU and be a Sweet Potato Council of California member. Currently, you can purchase plants and seed from Dave Souza with D&S Farms in Atwater without having to pay license fees.

RESEARCH

I will post results for my 2007 research trials on the website when my progress report is complete. Earlier research progress reports are available in our office or you can view and download it from our website at <http://cemerced.ucdavis.edu>. (Click on the Vegetable Crops link). Summary of 2007 research:

- Collaborators Trial. California Beauregard trumped all other varieties in yield by a large margin. A couple of new reds look very promising, and two new Beauregard types from NC and LSU performed well.



- Beaugard clean seed project has shown that the new hill selections do not twine and have a higher #1 pack-out than our current selection.
- A methyl bromide alternatives project looking at other fumigants for the hotbeds was



started this year. Also included in the treatments is solarization. This project is funded from the USDA ARS.

- An N & K fertilizer trial looking specifically at impacts on yield and storage. Different orange-flesh varieties are also being evaluated for their long term storage potential. This project is funded by the Sweetpotato Council of California.
- Armyworm insecticide trial that turned into a Morningglory leafminer trial. The new insecticide Rimon did an excellent job and I plan to continue expanding treatments next year.
- LSU Advanced-Line variety trial.



Upcoming Winter Meeting

The annual sweetpotato winter meeting will be held in February this year. No official date has been set. The agenda will feature proper use of fertilizers, a research roundup, and an update on new DPR fumigation rules. CE units will be applied for.

FERTILIZER TIPS

With the price of fertilizer projected to be 50% higher in 2008, all growers should closely evaluate their fertilizer program to make sure they are getting maximum use from their fertilizer dollar:

- ✓ Get a soil test. Soils that test higher than 25 and 150 ppm P and K, respectively, are unlikely to respond to additional fertilizer. At most you will need to replace what is removed by the crop, which is about 1.5 lbs P₂O₅ and 5 lbs K₂O per harvested bin.
- ✓ Make use of nutrient credits from compost and manure.
- ✓ N needed for Beaugard and Diane ranges from 125 - 175 lbs per acre. Apply through the drip tape in the first half of the season.
- ✓ Reduce the amount of N for Koto Buki, Golden Sweet, and Bienville.

Lets all hope for a wet winter this year. Happy Holidays.

Scott Stoddard
Farm Advisor

NC STATE UNIVERSITY

March 14, 2007

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Dear Scott,

This letter serves as a notification to the California Sweetpotato community of the status of the sweetpotato variety 'Covington'. 'Covington', released by the NC State University Department of Horticulture Science Sweetpotato Breeding and Genetics Program, is making significant gains in the sweetpotato industry. Improved yield, quality, pack-out, and insect and nematode resistance are three aspects 'Covington' offers today's sweetpotato grower.

A plant patent application has been filed to protect NC State's investment in 'Covington'. 'Covington' is currently available only under license from NC State. Each license allows for the production, sale, and distribution of "seed" to growers for commercial production, with a royalty being collected on all sales of Covington "seed". "Seed" consists of plants, vegetative cuttings, and/or storage roots.

Currently, the NC State Micropropagation Unit (MPU) is the only party authorized to micropropagate 'Covington' and distribute nuclear planting material to licensed certified seed growers, who then produce Elite, G1 and G2 "seed" of Covington for sale to growers. California sweetpotato growers should only acquire seed from a licensed NC grower. Currently, no out-of-state producers of seed have been licensed to sell seed of 'Covington'.

If you or any of your grower clientele have any questions regarding 'Covington', our licensing program, or are interested in producing seed of 'Covington' under a License Agreement in CA, please feel to contact me.

Sincerely,



Billy B. Houghteling
Interim Director
Office of Technology Transfer
North Carolina State University