

1892

# Sweet potatoes

Harcourt Alexander Morgan

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*Bureau of Animal Industry*

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BULLETIN

OF THE

STATE EXPERIMENT STATION

OF THE

LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY AND A. & M. COLLEGE,

AT

BATON ROUGE, LA.

WM. C. STUBBS, Ph. D., Director and Official State Chemist.

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SWEET POTATOES,

BY H. A. MORGAN AND B. B. ROSS.

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ISSUED BY THE BUREAU OF AGRICULTURE.

T. S. ADAMS, COMMISSIONER.

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BATON ROUGE, LA.

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1892.

# LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY AND A. & M. COLLEGE.

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LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY AND A. AND M. COLLEGE. }  
OFFICE OF EXPERIMENT STATIONS, BATON ROUGE, LA. }

Capt. T. S. Adams, Commissioner of Agriculture, Baton Rouge, La. :

DEAR SIR—I hand you herewith a Bulletin on Sweet Potatoes, covering the very careful results obtained at the State Experiment Station, Baton Rouge, by Prof. H. A. Morgan and Prof. B. B. Ross. The importance of this crop to our State justifies the publication of a bulletin in its interest. I therefore ask that it be published as Bulletin No. 13, Second Series.

Very respectfully submitted,

WM. C. STUBBS,

Director.

"Cumar." Wherever its origin, it has now spread over the world and millions to-day partake of it.

#### VALUE OF THE PLANT.

The plant is highly esteemed in the South, as is attested by the presence of a potato patch at every home, be it a lowly hut of the farm laborer or the handsome home of some large planter. It is one of our staple crops and is enjoyed by the prince as well as the peasant. While not grown extensively, save by a few truckers for market, yet the the aggregate production of this esculent is enormous. The estimated crop of this plant last year for Louisiana was 2,698,577 bushels.

Recently its culture has been extended to the North, where it is found that some of the more rapid growing varieties succeed well. The value of this plant as a food product for both man and stock of all kinds, and the increasing demand for it in Northern and Canadian markets, where heretofore it was unknown and untried, should at least attract the attention of the progressive agriculturist and cause him to consider how this crop may be more profitably and economically produced. To do this there is needed:

1. A more careful study of the plant and the introduction of new or improvement of old varieties.
2. A systematic investigation of the manurial requirements of this plant.
3. How the plant may be improved and the yield increased by improved methods of cultivation.

The nomenclature of the Sweet Potato is execrable. The same varieties grown only a few miles apart are frequently known under different names. It is therefore difficult to convey to the public any idea of the character of a variety by giving only its name. Since there are many distinct varieties, it is necessary to adopt some method of classification and to attempt a description of each variety by giving characteristics, such as shape, color, size, taste, etc., as well as by pictorial illustrations, in order to convey to the reading public a true idea of the variety, which its name frequently fails to do.



The Station at Baton Rouge has, during the past year, conducted an extensive series of experiments with the sweet potato. Every accessible variety has been brought under cultivation and its comparative merits tested in the field, in the laboratory and on the table. Its manurial wants have also been studied and some light thrown upon this important point.

The following varieties with yields were grown on the Horticultural Grounds of Baton Rouge :

*Comparative Yield of Varieties of Sweet Potatoes Grown on Horticultural Grounds of State Experiment Station, Baton Rouge.*

Name of Variety Grown.	Yield Per Acre in Bushels.		
	Merchantable.	Culls.	Totals.
New Jersey Sweets .....	158.02	11.42	169.44
Georgia Yam .....	125.65	11.42	137.07
Pumpkin Yam .....	321.75	9.50	331.25
Vineless .....	66.63	5.71	72.34
Delaware .....	44.55	3.71	48.26
Spanish Yam .....	129.46	3.81	133.27
Barbadoes .....	79.20	2.47	81.67
Southern Queen .....	167.54	3.81	171.35
Norton .....	95.19	2.85	97.02
Shanghai or California .....	271.30	4.76	276.06
Red Nansemond .....	298.90	3.81	302.71
Sugar Yam .....	95.04	7.92	102.96
Peabody .....	95.19	1.90	97.09
Dog River .....	73.01	12.37	85.38

Several of the varieties giving the largest yields have also produced minimum amounts of culls. The culls consisted only of small potatoes. Excessively large potatoes, too large in fact for profitable marketing, were classified as merchantable, since they would be excellent food for stock. The Dog River gave the largest percentage of culls and the Red Nansemond the smallest. The Pumpkin Yam gives the largest yield, followed by Red Nansemond and Shanghai or California.

**SIZES OF THE POTATOES OF EACH VARIETY.**

To list the comparative sizes of the individual potato there were selected of each variety six of the largest specimens. These were carefully weighed with the following results :

*Weights of the Largest Potatoes from Each Variety.*

Name of Variety.	Weight of Six Large Potatoes.	Average Weight of One Potato.
New Jersey .....	3.06 lbs.	8.16 ozs.
Georgia Yams.....	2.75 "	7.33 "
Pumpkin Yams .....	4.94 "	13.46 "
Vineless .....	2.12 "	5.66 "
Delaware .....	1.50 "	4.00 "
Spanish Yam.....	2.94 "	7.83 "
Barbadoes .....	1.87 "	5.00 "
Southern Queen.....	2.75 "	7.33 "
Norton.....	2.31 "	6.16 "
Shanghai or Cal f r i a.....	5.12 "	13.66 "
Red Nansemond.....	5.62 "	15.00 "
Sugar.....	2.62 "	7.00 "
Peabody .....	2.19 "	5.83 "
Dog River. ....	1.62 "	4.33 "

It should be remembered that a potato ranging from five to nine ounces each finds the readiest favor in our markets. The marketable quality of these varieties can be easily compared and it will be found that only a few exceed this weight, while two fall slightly below.

## MANURIAL REQUIREMENTS OF SWEET POTATO.

Only a partial series was this year attempted. The manurial ingredients were supplied in our common fertilizers, cotton seed meal, acid phosphate and muriate of potash. These were used alone and in varying quantities, mixed. The variety Georgia Yam was selected for the experiment. The following are the results:

*Results of Experiments With Different Fertilizers on Sweet Potato.  
Variety, Georgia Yam.*

No of Experiment.	Kind and Amount of Fertilizer Used. Per Acre.	Yield Per Acre in Bushels.		
		Merchantable	ulls	Total.
No. 1.	300 lbs. Cotton Seed Meal .....	126.74	7.92	128.70
No. 2.	500 lbs. Cotton Seed Meal .....	91.08	5.94	97.02
No. 3.	1000 lbs Cotton Seed Meal .....	157.41	6.93	164.34
No. 4.	150 lbs. Muriate of Potash .....	131.67	6.93	138.60
No. 5.	300 lbs. Acid Phosphate .....	190.04	5.94	196.02
No. 6.	No manure .....	110.88	3.96	114.84
No. 7.	{ 100 lbs. Cotton Seed Meal .....	149.49	10.89	160.38
	{ 300 lbs. Acid Phosphate .....			
	{ 150 lbs. Muriate of Potash .....			
No. 8.	{ 400 lbs. Cotton Seed Meal .....	146.52	7.92	154.44
	{ 100 lbs. Acid Phosphate .....			
	{ 200 lbs. Muriate of Potash .....			

Sweet potatoes require for their best development a loose pulverulent sandy loam, fairly fertile, particularly so in phosphoric acid and potash. An excess of nitrogenous matter frequently causes an inordinate development of vines at the expense of roots—hence excessive quantities of ammoniacal manures are avoided in the growing of this crop. The soil upon which this experiment was made, is a dark brown loam—close, compact and cold—an inferior potato soil. It is fairly fertile, as is shown by the yield upon the unmanured plat. The acid phosphate has given the largest yield. Also Experiments Nos. 7 and 8, in which this substance enters as a component, have given fair results. The increase by the use of 1000 pounds cotton seed meal, may also be due to the presence in meal of 3 per cent. of phosphoric acid. This soil responds more readily to phosphoric acid than to either of the other ingredients, and hence it is not surprising to see the large yields where acid phosphate was used. It is thought by some that nitrogenous manures develop large, rough, uneven, unshapely potatoes. That the cotton seed meal will produce unshapely potatoes was apparent at a glance. Every experiment with this fertilizer gave potatoes with long



projections at each end, vulgarly styled "rat tails." If future applications of this substance has the same degenerating tendency upon all varieties, it will be a "bar sinister" to its further use on sweet potatoes. To test the effect of the different fertilizers upon the size of the potato, six of the largest of each variety were carefully weighed with the following results:

*Weight of Six of the Largest Potatoes Grown by Different Fertilizers.*

No. of Experiment.	Fertilizer Used.	Weight of Six Large Potatoes.	Average Weight of Each.
1	300 lbs. Cotton Seed Meal.....	1.94 lbs.	5.16 ozs.
2	500 lbs. Cotton Seed Meal.....	2.38 lbs.	6.33 "
3	1000 lbs. Cotton Seed Meal.....	2.75 lbs.	7.33 "
4	150 lbs. Muriate of Potash.....	2.50 lbs.	6.66 "
5	300 lbs. Acid Phosphate.....	3.25 lbs.	8.66 "
6	No Manure.....	1.81 lbs.	4.84 "
7	{ 100 lbs. Cotton Seed Meal.....	2.68 lbs.	7.16 "
	{ 300 lbs. Acid Phosphate.....		
	{ 150 lbs. Muriate of Potash.....		
8	{ 400 lbs. Cotton Seed Meal.....	2.25 lbs.	6.00 "
	{ 100 lbs. Acid Phosphate.....		
	{ 200 lbs. Muriate.....		

Here every form of fertilizer has increased the size of the potato. With cotton seed meal this increase has been proportional to the quantity used. Perhaps much of the increase with this fertilizer may be due to the elongated ends or rat tails. On this soil, it seems safe to commend acid phosphate as an essential ingredient of the fertilizers to be used under potatoes. Whether the other ingredients are needed is not yet clearly declared and future experiments must decide.

HOW FAR APART SHOULD "SLIPS" BE SET IN THE ROW.

To determine this much mooted question experiments were made by planting them 8 inches, 12 inches, 15 inches and 18 inches apart in the row. The results of merchantable potatoes were in favor of 18 inches apart, followed closely by 15 inches.

In total yield the 15 inches excelled. The following are the complete results:

*Results of Different Distances in the Row—Variety Used.*

Distance in the Row.	Yield Per Acre in Bushels.		
	Merchantable.	Culls.	Total.
Eight inches.....	94.05	8.91	102.96
Twelve inches.....	124.74	3.96	128.70
Fifteen inches.....	155.43	9.96	165.39
Eighteen inches.....	160.38	3.96	164.34

Six of the largest potatoes of each experiment were here weighed with the following results:

Distance in Row.	Weight.	
	Total.	Average.
Eight inches.....	1.75 lbs.	4.66 ozs.
Twelve inches.....	2.06 lbs.	5.49 ozs.
Fifteen inches.....	2.25 lbs.	6.00 ozs.
Eighteen inches.....	2.56 lbs.	6.82 ozs.

The size of the potato and the yield of merchantable potatoes increases almost regularly from 8 inches up to 18 inches. Of this single test with one variety it would seem that at least fifteen inches should be given between each slip for maximum results. Future tests with other varieties may however modify these conclusions.

VALUE OF DIFFERENT VARIETIES AS FOOD SHOWN BY CHEMICAL ANALYSES.

Fair samples of the different varieties of the potatoes grown were carefully analyzed by Prof. B. B. Ross and his assistant, Mr. R. E. Blouin, with the following results:

*Analyses of Varieties of Sweet Potatoes Grown on State Experiment Station, Baton Rouge, La.*

Variety.	Water.	Ash.	Albuminoids.	Fat.	Fibre.	Carb. Hydrates.
New Jersey.....	66.549	1.072	1.579	0.6014	0.8934	29.3052
Georgia Yam.....	65.030	1.01509	2.49	1.3249	0.79502	29.34418
Pumpkin Yam.....	67.83	1.0716	1.954	0.75	0.9866	27.4078
Ninels.....	63.548	1.1679	1.358	0.6435	0.8536	32.429
Delaware.....	69.455	1.2269	2.0803	1.289	0.7075	25.2413
Spanish Yam.....	60.853	1.0244	1.75	1.0638	1.0255	34.2913
Barbadoes.....	62.336	1.0957	1.51	0.5417	0.8605	33.6561
Southern Queen.....	63.295	1.0418	1.621	0.5745	0.86909	32.5986
Norton.....	61.426	1.0822	1.71	0.7164	1.09307	33.97233
Shanghai or California.....	65.182	1.04007	1.694	0.976	0.9542	30.1537
Red Nansemond.....	63.462	1.307	1.474	0.732	0.9842	32.048
Sugar.....	58.462	1.1024	1.711	0.634	0.9592	37.1296
Peabody.....	66.061	1.096	1.41	0.62	0.7382	30.0752
Dog River.....	67.003	1.2135	1.00	0.7382	1.0503	28.9916

The above analyses show a marked difference in the percent of the substances contained in the different varieties. The percent of water ranges from 69.455 in the Delaware to 58.462 in the sugar. The percentages of ash, from 1.015 in Georgia to 1.307 in Red Nansemond. The percentages of albumen from 2.49 in Georgia to 1 in the Dog River. The fat from 0.5417 in Barbadoes to 1.3249 in Georgia. The percentage of fibre from 0.7075 in Delaware to 1.093 in Norton. The percentage of carbohydrates from 34.29 in Spanish Yam to 25.24 in Delaware.

These differences are made more apparent by stating that 100 pounds Sugar Yams will give nearly 42 pounds of dry matter, containing about 37 pounds starch; sugar, etc., 1 pound of fibre,  $\frac{2}{3}$  of a pound of fat,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  pounds of albuminoids and 1 pound of ash. While the Delaware, with the same quantity, would afford only about 25 pounds dry matter— $\frac{1}{2}$  pound fibre,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  pounds fat, 2 pounds albuminoids and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  pounds ash.

An inspection of the above table will conclusively show that as a stock feed, the sweet potato is not a perfect one. The nutritive ratio is too wide. It is rich in carbohydrates and to be fed to the best advantage should be properly mixed with some con-

centrated food, rich in albuminoids and fat, such as cotton seed meal, wheat and rice bran, etc. When properly supplemented with these, it can be used with great profit in feeding stock, either for growth, fat, milk or work. In feeding, it should be remembered that at least three-fifths of the potatoes are water, and therefore a ration should be accordingly increased. A cow weighing 1000 pounds, should have about 24 pounds dry matter per day, and with a nutritive ratio of about 1 to 5. To obtain this, about 45 pounds of potatoes and 6 pounds of cotton seed meal are required, and it is believed that excellent results would be obtained from feeding such a ration. It is not unusual to secure with moderate efforts yields of 300 to 400 bushels of sweet potatoes per acre. This would give us a cheap fodder for stock, in case no market was afforded and the supply greater than the table demand.

#### PALATABILITY OR TABLE QUALITY OF THE VARIETIES.

In the discussion of this part of the subject no definite conclusions can be drawn. "*De gustibus non est disputandum.*" Southern people love the sugary yam and will grow no other for home use, and are surprised in shipping them to the North to find them slow of sale and low of price. They are surprised to find the dry starchy varieties preferred by all buyers. Therefore in determining the quality of the potato, regard must be had to home taste first, and the value in the Northern markets next. Some varieties which are dry and mealy on digging become sweet and palatable after "hilling" or "pitting" them through the winter, while others always remain dry and starchy.

Before deciding upon the comparative edible qualities of the different varieties, an explanation of the commonly used terms should be given: "mealy," means the potato is dry to the taste after it is cooked; "sugary," that it is syrupy when cooked, the sugar sometimes exuding during the operation. A "round" potato has a shape like Fig. 1, while yam shaped is exhibited in Fig. 2.

With these definitions our potatoes can be divided into four classes.



### III. The yam shaped and mealy—

New Jersey.

Vineless.

\*Peabody.

Delaware.

• Spanish.

Dog River.

\*Pumpkin.

\*These varieties present a few round specimens but the yam shape predominate.

### IV. The yam shaped and sugary—

Georgia.

The following table as to the comparative quality judging from a Louisiana standpoint, which gives decided preference for those of sugary properties.

Ten is assumed as the standard for perfection.

Variety.	Valuation.
New Jersey Sweet .....	6
Georgia Yam .....	8.5
Pumpkin Yam .....	4.5
Vineless .....	6
Delaware .....	4.5
Spanish Yam .....	6
Barbadoes .....	6
Southern Queen .....	6
Norton .....	4
Shanghai or California .....	4
Red Nansemond .....	4
Sugar Yam .....	10
Peabody .....	5
Dog River .....	5

#### WHY HAVE WE SO FEW VARIETIES?

The paucity of varieties of sweet potatoes is very evident when compared with other esculents of even less popularity. This may be due to two causes, viz :

1. The apparent difficulty in procuring seeds even in climates where the plant flowers abundantly and has sufficient time to ripen its seed.

2. The persistency with which the once adopted methods of cultivation have been followed.

The latter can be overcome by careful and intelligent cultivators varying their methods and developing higher types of the present varieties—but can the former be removed?

#### CAN WE RAISE THE SWEET POTATO FROM TRUE SEED?

It is well known that in the Southern States, particularly those lying on the gulf, that the sweet potato blooms with the regularity of the season. Whether these blooms bear true seed has not yet to the writer's knowledge ever been determined.

This year efforts were made to secure the true seed and with success.

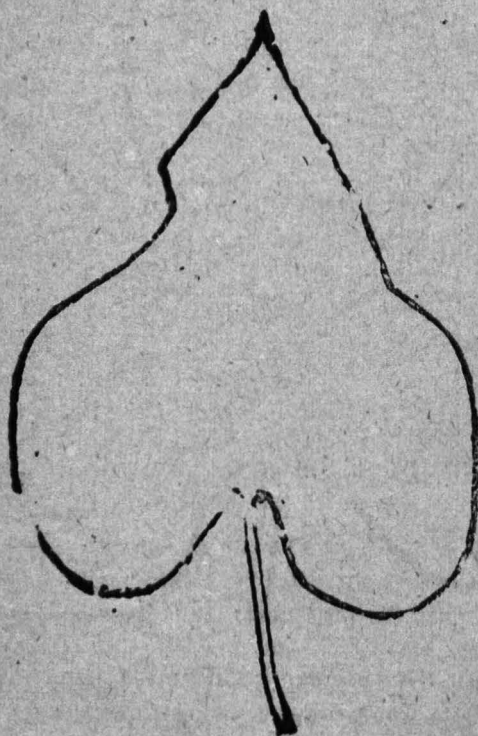
Varieties planted on the 15th of May flowered during the latter part of September and early in October. To procure the seed some of the flowers were placed in small paper bags. Several were treated in this way on October 10, and on November 3, it was found that these flower stalks with ripe seed had fallen in the bags. In this way

#### TRUE SEED OF THE SWEET POTATO

has been obtained which will be planted in the spring with the hope of obtaining new varieties. This sudden dropping off of the ripe flower stalk may be the reason why seed has not been heretofore obtained. Does not this seeding and sudden dropping off explain the presence of two distinct varieties sometimes found in the *old potato patches*, where only one variety was planted this year? Seed from previous crop have germinated in the midst of the slips set out. Sometimes, a potato, half red and half white, is found in a patch where "reds" and "whites" have been growing side by side. The pollen of one has fertilized the flower of the other and the seed produced have germinated, giving the cross.

## DESCRIPTION OF VARIETIES.

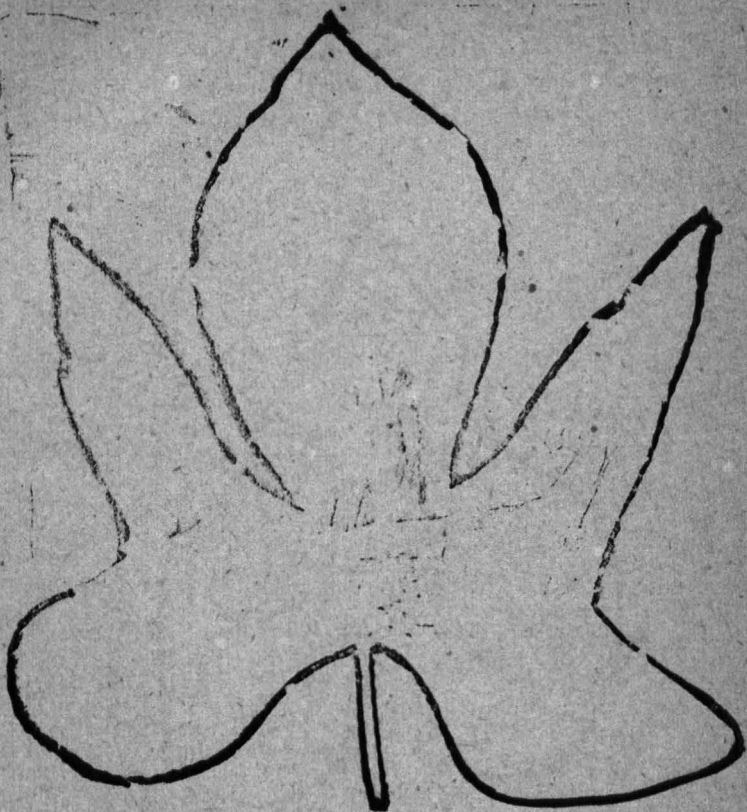
A figure of the leaf is given with the notes on each variety, and although many leaves may vary somewhat in outline, yet the figures correspond in shape to representative leaves.



NEW JERSEY SWEET.

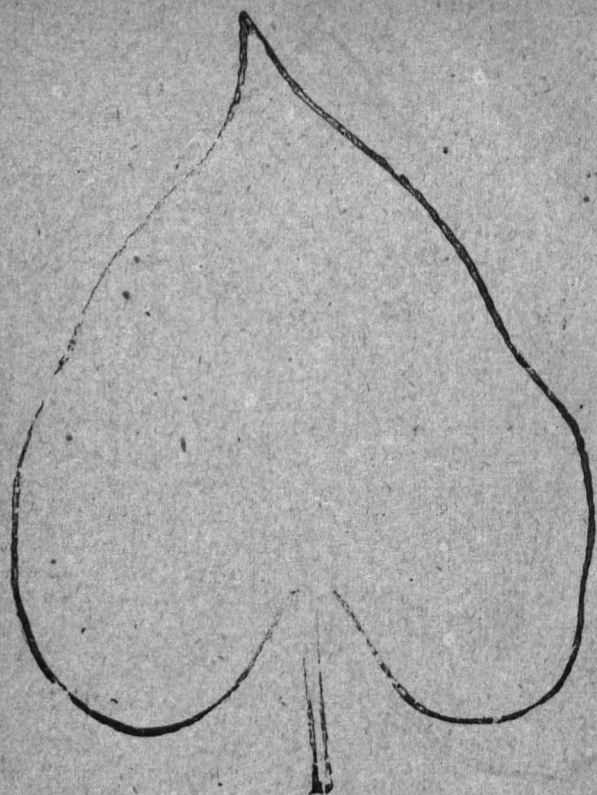
*New Jersey Sweet.*—This is a strong growing plant, and one which seems well adapted to this soil and climate. The potatoes are “yam-shaped” and of a rusty color. The general appearance of the potato is attractive and the yield is very fair.

GEORGIA YAM.



*Georgia Yam.*—This is often called the Common Louisiana Yam, because of its true name not being known and of its general cultivation throughout the State. This variety, on account of the shape of the leaf, is sometimes called Sugar, but the leaves of the Sugar are smaller, and by referring to the classification it will be found that the potatoes of the Sugar are round, while the Georgia are yam-shaped. The Georgia has also a stronger growing vine than the Sugar, and the yield is usually better. The color of the potato is flesh (usually called white) and the shape of leaf is as illustrated at Fig. —.

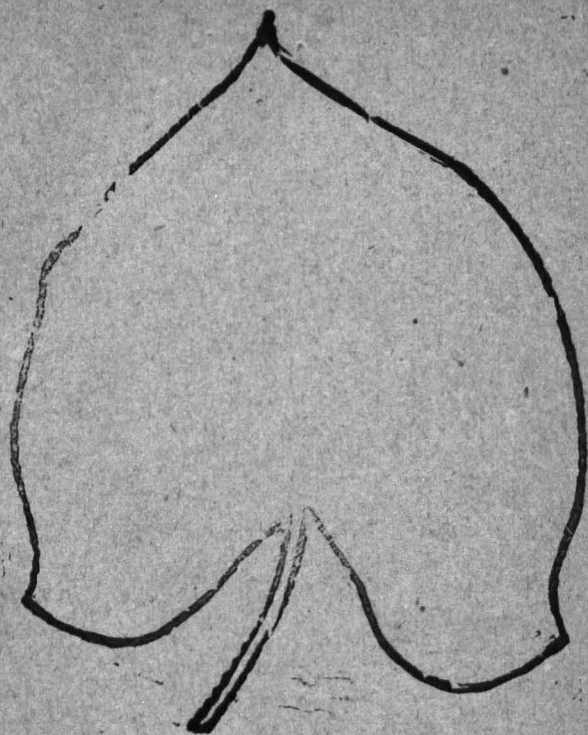




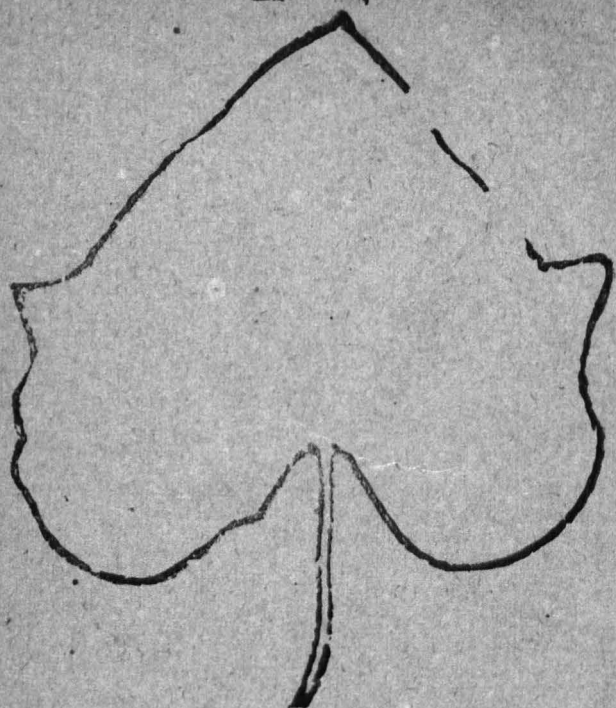
PUMPKIN YAM.

*Pumpkin Yam*—This in shape resembles the Georgia, but is a strong growing productive variety—giving the largest yield in our experiments. Many of the potatoes are *over-large*, and are not readily marketable immediately after being dug.

VINELESS



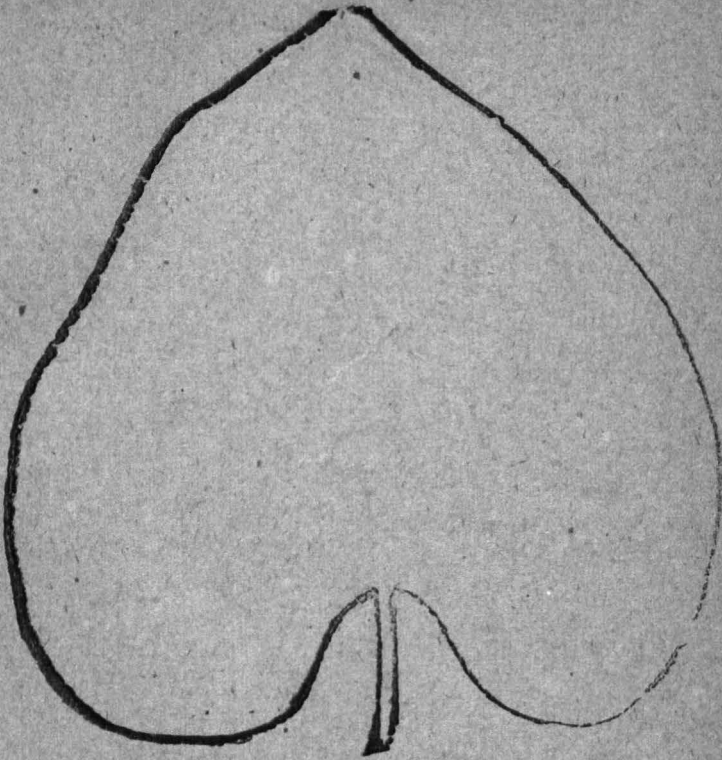
*Vineless*—This is a peculiar growing plant. The vine does not run but bunches, thus permitting the rows to be placed closer than with running varieties. This variety did not yield well with us, but is highly spoken of elsewhere. The potatoes are yam shaped and present an attractive appearance. This variety is worthy of further trial.



BARBADOES.

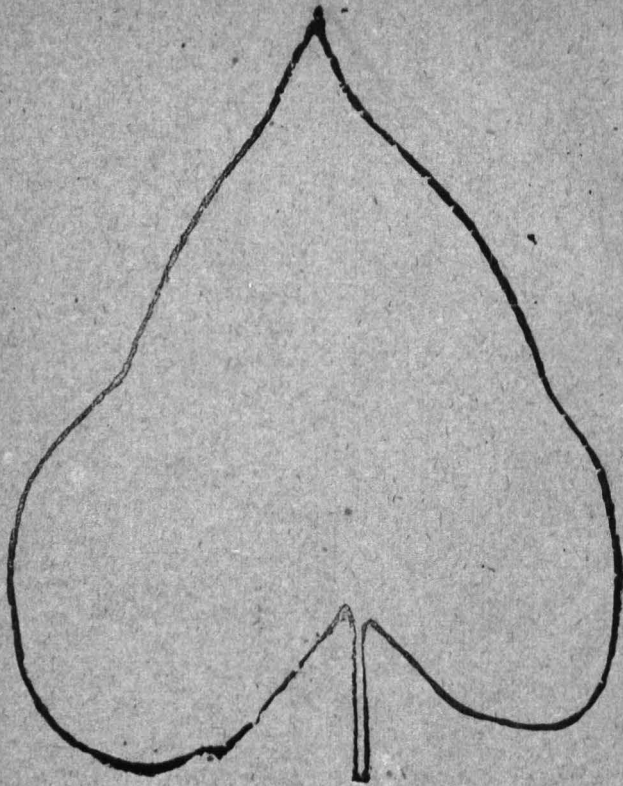
*Barbadoes*—In shape like the Southern Queen, ut not so white in color. Vine hardier than that of the Southern Queen. It stood the effect of a slight frost, while the latter gave visible signs of damage. See table as to comparative hardiness.

SOUTHERN QUEEN or QUEEN OF THE SOUTH.

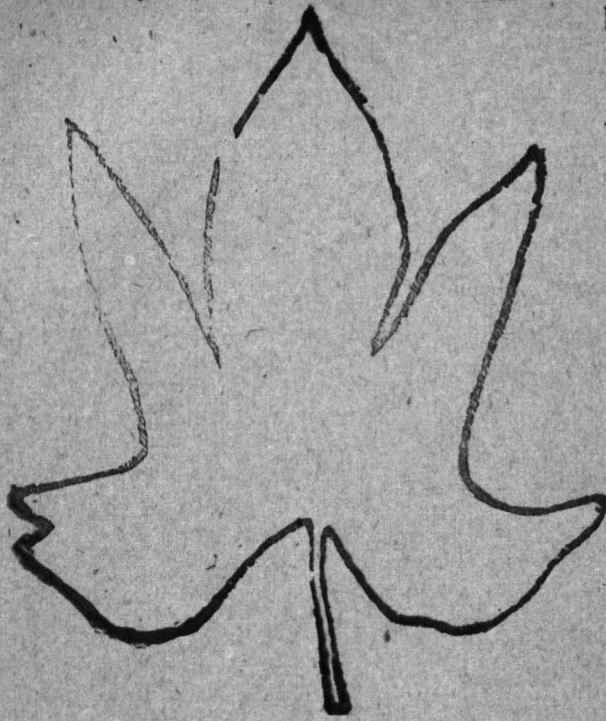


*Southern Queen or Queen of the South*—This is the most popular variety, except those (Georgia and Sugar) which are regarded as *Yams*. The shape of the potato is illustrated at Fig. 1. This is one of the strongest growing varieties resembling in its growth the *Shanghai* or *California*. This variety is a good producer on nearly all soils and is very popular upon the market after the yams have been disposed of. It improves very much in flavor by *pitting* or by storage in a dry cool place.





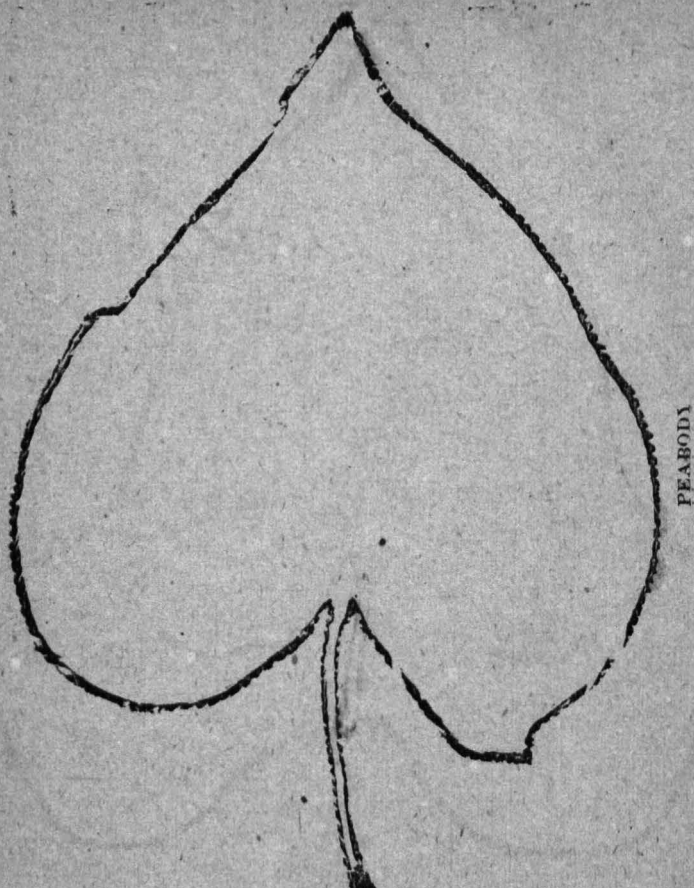
*Red Nansemond*—The true color is not red but more of a magenta. This is also a strong growing variety and as stated under head of Shanghai, produces some potatoes too large for best marketing purposes. The shape is round and the quality rather inferior.



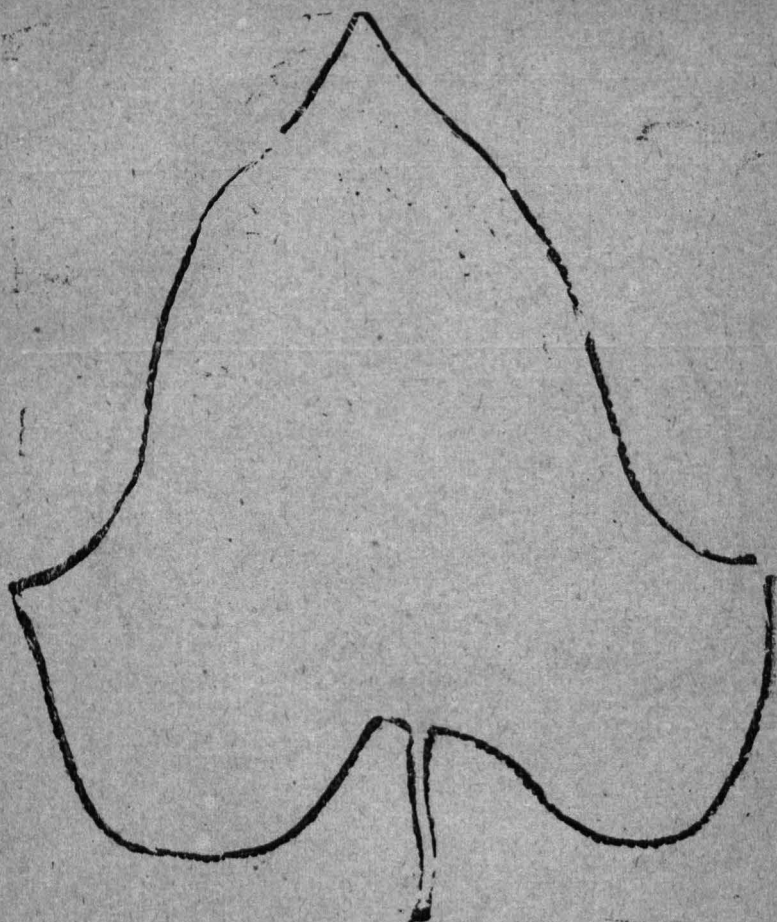
SUGAR or CREOLE YAM

*Sugar or Creole Yam*—Quality finest of all varieties. Meets with ready sale directly after digging. It is a yam, so called, but is round in shape resembling more the Southern Queen than the Georgia Yam. The vine is not vigorous nor does it produce well.

The notch in the lower right-hand corner of the leaf of this variety, as seen in figure outlining it, illustrates a very common variation.



*Peabody*—This variety resembles the Red Nansemond in shape and color, but grows less luxuriantly both in vine and potatoes. It is superior in flavor to the Red Nansemond. Of its class this is not so desirable a variety as some of the others.



DOG RIVER.

*Dog River*—This is a local name having been grown in the Dog River section of Alabama for some time. The potato is yam shaped and in color somewhat like the Peabody, but very much lighter. The flesh is yellow spotted with yellowish red. This variety was planted a little later than the other varieties, and hence not being so fully matured gave a greater yield of unmerchantable tubers, but of its class it is quite a desirable potato.



The light frosts at the end of the growing season effected the varieties as follows:

First Frost, 42.3° Affected the Following:	Second Frost, 40° Affected the Following:	Third Frost, 34.5° Affected the Following:
Shanghai or California Southern Queen. Pumpkin. Red Nansemond.	Norton. Delaware. New Jersey. Vineless. Barbadoes. Spanish Yam. Dog River. Peabody.	Sugar.  Georgia.

#### CONCLUSIONS ON VARIETIES OF SWEET POTATOES.

(1) Those varieties which have the most ready sale in Louisiana immediately after digging are the Georgia and Sugar.

(2) The most desirable mealy varieties are the Southern Queen, New Jersey, Barbadoes, Spanish Yam, probably Norton and Dog River.

(3) Varieties to be grown as food for stock, Red Nansemond, Pumpkin and California.

(4) The Vineless requires further trial.