



Kumara **(Sweetpotato; *Ipomoea batatas*)**

PRODUCTION NOTES

KUMARA

There are a few different varieties of kumara but the most commonly grown commercially in New Zealand is known as Owairaka Red. New shoots (tipu) approximately 20cm long are plucked from sterile seed beds and used as seedlings to establish crops. Traditional varieties include *Taputini*, *Rekamauroa* and *Waina*

SOIL PREPARATION

- Every 3 years the crop should be rotated to another plot to prevent disease carry-over.
- Cultivate the seedbed so a fine texture is achieved.
- Mound row/s at least 10cm high
- Prefers soil pH 5.0 – 6.9
- Apply pre-emergence herbicide if preferred.
- Apply N:P:K fertiliser (10:25:15 for main crops) as a base dressing at planting.
- Plant mid-late October – early November after frosts and soil temperatures increase (14°C minimum).
- Requires 25000+ tipu/ha.
- Spacing between rows should be 1 metre; between plants in the row = 30-40cm.

PLANTING TIPU

- Pick tipu up like a frying pan with the roots facing away from you.
- Extend your index finger and adjust tipu so that the base of the roots are at least 2 or 3 cm beyond the tip of your index finger.
- Make sure you are facing east when planting tipu so roots are orientated east!
- Drive your index finger down into prepared mound on a 45 degree angle making sure the stem is underneath it (to achieve the J shape) and then pull back a little so that when you release your hand, the tipu should be standing reasonably upright and roots all covered.
- After planting give each tipu at least 1 cup water to help with establishment.
- Keep weeded.

CROP MANAGEMENT

- If side dressing of fertiliser is used at planting then no further fertiliser will be required after crop establishment.
- Weed primarily by hand until the crop achieves full cover of the ground.
- Pest control – primarily *anuhe* or caterpillar, wireworm, slugs and snails. Larger pests such as pukeko, rabbits and hares can also be a nuisance
- Disease control – primarily in storage; tubers are susceptible to some rots.

HARVEST

Harvest from dry ground March onwards and complete prior to the first frost. Cure in the open air for several days to ensure skin is suitable for storage conditions.