

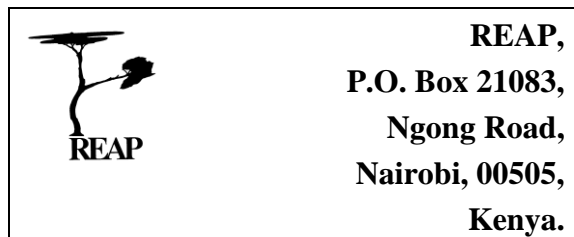
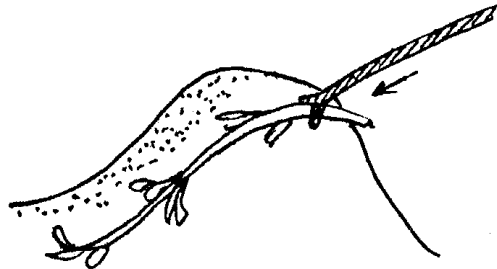
3. It is helpful to store cuttings for 2-3 days before planting, as this encourages root growth. They should be stored in the shade, and kept covered and moist.

4. The lower leaves can be removed from the cuttings.

5. Only 5-6 cuttings should be planted in each mound. Cuttings should be about 30 cm (one foot) apart in a ridge.

6. The cuttings must be planted the right way up. Remember the bud is always above the leaf scar.

7. Use a forked stick to plant the cuttings. Plant by pushing near the lower end of the cutting - not near the middle. Using a stick helps in getting the cuttings planted deep. At least two thirds of each cutting should be buried.



## SWEET POTATO WEEVIL

*(Cylas puncticollis.)*

One of the most serious pests of the sweet potato is the Sweet Potato Weevil. The **larvae** look like worms and make holes in the tubers and vines. The adults are small black beetles (weevils).



The larvae are what do the damage to the sweet potatoes and they are also most noticeable. They attack the leaves, stems and tubers of the potatoes, eating them and making holes. The main damage is in the tubers where the waste materials the larvae leave cause a bad taste and the holes open the way for secondary infestations of fungi and bacteria.

The infection normally spreads from old sweet potato gardens through the cuttings used for planting. The weevil population is greatest at the beginning of the dry season because the temperatures are high and the soil cracks, exposing the tubers. The larvae cannot move through the soil but can easily move in the cracks to get to the tubers

### *Life Cycle*

The eggs are laid in small pockets at the base of a stem or in a tuber. Each egg is protected by a plug of faeces. The eggs hatch in approximately 8 days. The larvae tunnel through the tuber, feeding on it and contaminating it with faeces, causing

rotting of the tuber as well. The larvae pupate and after 15-20 days emerge as adults.

## **METHODS OF CONTROLLING THE SWEET POTATO WEEVIL**

It is difficult to deal with Sweet Potato Weevils when they are already in the crop. Good husbandry can however control them by preventing them spreading. When Sweet Potato Weevils are known to be a problem in an area the following practices can help: -

1. ***Crop Rotation.*** Sweet Potatoes should not be grown on the same land from one year to the next. A new area dug for sweet potatoes should be as far from an old one as possible.

2. ***Selection of Cuttings.*** When planting a new area of sweet potatoes the cuttings should be checked for signs of Sweet Potato Weevil. Any that have holes made by the larvae should be rejected and either fed to livestock or burnt.

3. ***Early Planting.*** Sweet potatoes that are planted early are mature before the beginning of the dry season, so they avoid the increase in Sweet Potato Weevils when the soil cracks.

4. ***Plant the Cuttings Deep.*** Sweet Potato Weevils do not penetrate deep into the soil, so sweet potatoes that develop deeper in the soil have fewer weevils. Planting with a forked stick helps to get deeper planting.

5. ***Re-ridge.*** Sweet Potato Weevils do not penetrate deep into the soil. So if soil is washed off ridges or mounds by the rain, more soil should be piled onto the mounds and ridges to keep the tubers deep in the soil.

6. ***Destroy infested Plants after Harvest.*** Plants with many weevils on should be fed completely to livestock or burnt.

Sweet Potato Weevils also become more of a problem when the tubers are "stored" in the field and used when needed. If sweet potato weevils are a problem the sweet potatoes should be harvested early, as soon as they mature and if they cannot be stored as they are they can be dried.

## **HOW TO PLANT SWEET POTATOES AS SHORT CUTTINGS**

1. Using short cuttings means that fewer vines are needed and this makes selection easier. Healthy vines should be selected when they are collected from the old field so that any showing disease or Sweet Potato Weevil holes are rejected. Cuttings from the bases of the vine should be particularly carefully checked.

2. The vines should be cut into short lengths about 30-40 cm (one foot - 18") long. If there are many nodes the vines can be shorter. If there are fewer nodes the pieces need to be longer.

