

A Sweet Potato Water Fix

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Grandpa Mike, Uncle J.R., and Andy live in California on a small ten-acre farm. They are growing sweet potatoes that were planted last spring. So, to conserve water, Andy talked to his grandpa and uncle about putting in a drip line.

“Drip irrigation is a way for the plant to get water directly on the roots. It also uses less water,” Andy told his grandpa and uncle.

“No time,” replied his uncle.

“Maybe next year,” Grandpa Mike said. “Sweet potatoes are roots that grow deep in the ground. It is a good thing they have some protection because the sun is boiling hot.”

For over two weeks, the summer temperature was over 100 degrees. Taking their hats off, the three went inside for a cold drink.

“I have never seen it so hot here for so long,” Grandpa said as he took a long drink of his ice water.

“I don’t know what we’re going to do to keep these sweet potatoes alive and growing,” said Uncle J.R. “Because of the drought, our irrigation water has been reduced. We’re only going to get a third of the water we got last year.”

The family was worried the sweet potatoes were going to die.

“Why don’t we set up a drip line?” Andy said. “It’s not too late.”

“Yes, Andy, I think it’s time,” said Grandpa Mike.

The three headed to the farm supply store to buy the necessary parts to install the drip line. They bought flexible tubing, drip tape with emitters, fittings, and stakes, along with the materials to hook it up to their water well.

The family began to work together to install the drip line. With only a couple of hours of daylight left, they continued to work late into the night.

“We need to get this drip line in as soon as we can to save our crop,” Grandpa Mike said.

Once the drip line was installed, Andy was happy to turn the water on the following evening. It is cooler at night, and the water will be able to get to the roots of the sweet potatoes instead of being evaporated.

Andy stayed up all night making sure the drip-line system worked properly.

Grandpa Mike woke up the next morning and noticed the sweet potatoes' leaves had perked up overnight.

The crop was harvested in mid-October.

Uncle J.R. commented, "Looks like we were able to harvest a decent crop. Usually, we harvest 30 to 32 bins of sweet potatoes per acre, but this year, due to the drought, we were only able to harvest about 25 bins."

"I'm just happy we have a crop to harvest," replied Grandpa Mike.

The whole family helped with harvest. As they loaded the last of the bins on the truck to be shipped to the local packing shed, there was a feeling of relief. After the truck pulled out, three very tired people walked to the house.

At the dinner table that night, Grandpa Mike said, "Andy, Uncle J.R. and I owe you a huge thank you. That drip irrigation idea of yours saved our crop."

Andy went to sleep that night smiling. "I love my Grandpa Mike and Uncle J.R.," he whispered as he fell asleep.