Sweet potatoes are the last of the summer crops to get planted. The soil was prepared a few weeks ago and had turned green with weeds. I was so glad it wasn't planted yet. A run through with the re-breaker and harrow took care of them.

We start the sweet potato bed in late March. Three bushels were spread out in a pit about a foot deep. An equal mixture of compost and sand barely covers them, and a wire mesh is laid on. Then we finish covering them with the mixture, about four or five inches deep.

In early May they start to poke up, and by mid May the slips are ready to pull and plant. We pull them, but have learned not to plant them, yet. They are "healed in" at another spot, meaning temporarily planted in bunches, and watered. The wire mesh keeps the sweet potatoes in place when we pull the slips.

In another week there is another flush of slips. Now we have enough to head for the field. The advantages of not planting the first ones in the field are two-fold. We have more plants, but more importantly, the field gets weeded mechanically. A mid May planting of sweet potatoes gets real weedy because the weather hasn't warmed up enough for their liking. Holding the plants until June and plowing the field another time, has worked a lot better for us.

I throw up ridges with the hillers, and we are ready to go. A plant is laid on the ridge, and a stick pushes the root into the soil. We firm it in with our feet, leaving a slight depression in the ridge. They immediately get a shot of water. The roots are kept we from the time they're dug up until they're planted. How did folks farm without five gallon plastic buckets?

Down the row the slips are set, and a rhythm emerges. A plant is laid, pushed in, stepped on and watered, then another and then another. Soon (a relative term), a couple thousand are in the ground and darkness is creeping up on us. But yesterday's cornbread inspires six rows of Indian corn to get sown as the summer night falls.

We still have 2000 more to plant, but it'll be a few days before the bed sprouts them up. After ours are in, neighbors will drop by to get some for their own gardens. This variety was grown by Coin Hire's grandparents in the Haysville Community over one hundred years ago. If I have my way, Macon County will be growing them one hundred years from now.