

Sweetpotato little leaf (055)

Summary

- Widespread distribution. Asia, Africa, Oceania. On sweetpotato and relatives. Occasionally, an important disease.
- Veins on young leaves show clearly, side shoots grow, becoming bushy, erect, with small leaves.
- Caused by bacteria-like organism in phloem tubes.
- Spread by leafhoppers that feed on diseased plants then infect others after 20 days. More important in dry times. Storage root yields absent or very low.
- Cultural control: plant only disease-free vines; do not plant near infected crops; remove affected plants when seen; collect and burn trash after harvest.
- Chemical control: PDPs: derris, pyrethrum, or chilli; or synthetic pyrethroids.

Common Name

Sweetpotato little leaf, sweetpotato witches' broom

Scientific Name

Candidatus Phytoplasma aurantifolia

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Information from Jackson GVH *et al.* (1984) Sweet potato little leaf. Advisory leaflet 19. South Pacific Commission, Noumea, New Caledonia. (https://lrd.spc.int/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=276&Itemid=615&limitstart=30).

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Photo 1. The first symptom on a young sweetpotato leaf with little leaf phytoplasma is a "vein-clearing"; the veins are clearly seen, even the small ones.



Photo 2. The vines infected by little leaf phytoplasma appear bushy; leaves are small and there are many small shoots along the vines.



Photo 3. The leafhopper, *Orasius lotophagorum rykyuensis*, spreads the little leaf phytoplasma.



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