Mulching to manage sweet potato weevil

Recognize the problem
The sweet potato weevil is a small black insect with a hard body and a long nose. It damages sweet potato plants. The surface of storage roots (tubers) may be scarred or chewed. There may also be small holes on the tubers where the weevils laid their eggs. The inside of the roots may be tunnelled and some areas may be soft and rotten.

Background
A layer of mulch material helps to reduce loss of water from the soil. This extra moisture stops cracks from forming in the soil and that means that the sweet potato weevil cannot get to the tubers underground through the cracks. The mulch material also provides a good environment for ants which are a natural enemy of sweet potato weevil. Mulching also helps the growth and yield of the sweet potato through stopping the soil drying out, suppressing weeds, and supplying nutrients from organic matter.

Management
- Dry some plant material, such as elephant grass.
- Spread the dry plant material (mulch) evenly on the surface of the sweet potato ridges two weeks after planting sweet potato.
- One to two tons of elephant grass is enough for one acre.

Scientific name(s) > *Cylas puncticollis*

The recommendations in this factsheet are relevant to: Sierra Leone

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