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AM FUNGAL INOCULATION OF SWEET POTATO SOMATIC EMBRYOS IMPROVES EMBRYO SURVIVAL AND PLANTLET FORMATION

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Responses of somatic embryos of sweet potato (cv. White Star) at different developmental stages to *in vitro* inoculation with *Glomus etunicatum* (isolate INVAM FL329) were evaluated. Somatic embryos were grown in glass tubes containing sterilized vermiculite and sand. A layer of Natrosol + White's medium was used as a carrier for AM fungal spores. Survival of embryos inoculated with AM fungi differed significantly (p£0,05) from non inoculated embryos at the rooted-cotyledonary-torpedo and rooted-elongated-torpedo stages. The stage of embryo development affected embryo survival among the inoculated somatic embryos. A significant difference (p£0,05) in plantlet formation for somatic embryos inoculated or not with AM fungi was only observed at the rooted-elongated-torpedo stage. However, within inoculated embryos a significant difference (p£0,05) for plantlet formation was observed among the somatic embryo stages. The rooted-elongated-torpedo stage had the greatest plantlet formation. These results demonstrate that inoculation of somatic embryos with AM fungi improves embryo survival and plantelet formation, and there should enhance use of somatic embryos as synthetic seeds.