

Potato Growing Fact Sheet



A staple daily food for most households, so a great investment in space and time that will give every home tasty rewards that can be stored for months. Unlike farmers, amateur gardeners can select potato varieties for taste and texture rather than huge crops.



Soil and position

Potatoes will grow in almost any soil although they crop much better if the soil is enriched with a balanced plant food such as GroYour Own Vegetable & Fruit Plant Food. Potatoes grow best in an acid soil so add well rotted garden compost or liberal amounts of GroYour Own Soil Improver to the bottom of the planting trench. Don't lime soil at any time.

If you don't have the garden space, try growing bag, specially designed for potatoes, on a balcony, patio or path. The GroYour Own gro-sac for potatoes and root vegetables has been formulated for better yields without requiring lots of space or the hard work digging.

Seed varieties

Take your pick at your local garden centre. For plenty of small 'new' potatoes in July plant a variety classified as 'Early'. For a large crop of big tubers that will be ready in September select a 'Maincrop'.

Always buy certified seed potatoes. You will then know they are free from virus infections. The texture of cooked potatoes varies between waxy and flowery and some are best for boiling, others for roasting and even more for chips. For example 'Red Duke of York' is useless when boiled as it falls apart, but for roast potatoes or mashed there is nothing to beat it.

First Earlies

Rocket
Foremost
Epicure

Second Earlies

Estima
Wilja
Kestrel

Maincrop

Desiree
Romano
Maris Piper

Salad

Lady Christl
Pink Fir Apple
Ratte

Sowing seeds



Planting potato sets

Seed potatoes are normally available in the first few months of the year, well before they can be planted outside. To get them growing safely, place them in egg boxes or a seed tray so that the new shoots can grow indoors on a light windowsill that is frost free. This technique, called 'chitting', is said to improve yields, but probably is used only to gain a few weeks in the time needed for growing earlies in the ground and to provide the right conditions for storage.

In April dig a trench 15cm (6in) deep and plant the potatoes leaving a gap of 30cm (12in) between each one. Leave a space of 60cm (2ft) between rows. Fill the trench with soil mixed 50:50 with Multi Purpose Compost, garden compost, or other organic matter.

Care

When the green stems have grown to 30cm (1ft) tall pull some extra soil around the stems to make a ridge. This soil is to exclude light from the potatoes that are forming on the surface.

Water in dry weather and sprinkle SlugClear Advanced Pellets around the plants after showery weather. If the weather is wet during July then potato blight could easily spread damaging the storing qualities of your crop. To protect the foliage, spray with Dithane or Copper Fungicide during a dry spell of weather.

Water potatoes during dry weather and add All Purpose Soluble Plant Food to your watering can every fortnight throughout the summer.

Harvesting

Earlies will be ready for digging when the flowers have all fully opened; maincrop or lates in September. Reject any potatoes that are green, they are poisonous.

