

# Tips On Growing Potatoes

## Check list:

You will need:-

- \* M.A.A.F. CERTIFIED SEED POTATOES
- \* BOX OR TRAY FOR "CHITTING"
- \* LABELS
- \* FERTILISER

## How many will you need?

As a rough guide, 3Kg (6.5lb). of seed potatoes would be enough for a 20-25ft row. Yields vary between varieties. Early varieties produce the least and maincrop the most.

## How do you get the earliest and heaviest crop?

By buying your seed potatoes early and starting them into growth (chitting), you can get a head start in the spring!

Stand the tubers upright in a tray or egg carton with the rose end uppermost. This is the end of the tuber with most buds and the opposite end to where it was attached to the mother plant. Put the tray in a well lit, cool room or garage, ensuring that it is frost free. Leave them there until the shoots develop. Shoot development takes about 6 weeks and you should aim for short fat dark green, or purple shoots of 1 - 2cm length. This is the ideal stage for planting....**if your soil is ready.**

## Do potatoes need special treatment?

Potatoes can be grown in virtually all soil types and are really very easy to grow. They are particularly good for cleaning up land which has been neglected, because the cultivation that they require kill weeds. If possible avoid soil which has been treated with lime, or that has grown potatoes during the last 2 years. Choose a sunny spot - avoid low lying areas which tend to be frost pockets. Dig the soil thoroughly, preferably in the autumn, and dig in as much organic matter, such as peat or compost, that you can spare. Before planting, rake in 100 grams (4oz) of PELLETTED CHICKEN MANURE or 200grams (6oz) of GROWMORE per square metre. Where slugs are prevalent use 'Growing Success' Ferramol or Metaldehyde Slug Pellets.

## How do you plant them?

Plant in small trenches ~~5~~deep, space tubers 12" apart for early varieties, 15" apart for maincrop. Rows should be 24" apart for earlies, and 30" apart for maincrop. Plant tubers with the shoots uppermost some gardeners prefer to thin out the shoots to 2 or 3 of the strongest before planting. we do not recommend cutting tubers in half as this often leads to pest and disease problems.

## When do you plant?

Earlies can be planted in late March and maincrop in mid April in most areas. However, if your garden is cold and liable to late frosts, it is best to delay planting a little, if warm plant earlier.

## 'Earthing up'

When the shoots or 'haulm' are about 9" high, the soil should be banked up around the potatoes to a depth of at least 6". This prevents the new potatoes from becoming green and inedible. Break up lumps with a hoe to achieve a fine tilth.

## **Aftercare**

When the shoots come through the soil initially, it is important to protect these tender shoots against frost. This can easily be done with newspaper, cloth or sacking covering which can easily be removed once the risk of frost is past. When the tubers begin to form make sure that they are not short of water irrigate if necessary. During warm humid weather, your potatoes may be attacked by blight. This disease spreads fast but can be prevented and controlled with 'Dithane 945'.

## **Harvesting**

Lift early varieties when flowers appear. The tubers should then be at least hens egg size. Lift only as many as you need per meal so that they are really fresh - that's when they have the best flavour! Dig second earlies and maincrop in late September or October. It may be necessary to cut the haulm off before lifting, in which case, it is best to wait 10 days or so after cutting so that the skins of the tubers have time to mature. They will then store better.

**YIELDS VARY WITH VARIETY AND SOIL TYPE BUT YOU MIGHT EXPECT FROM A 10FT ROW...12LBS OF EARLIES OR 20LBS OF MAINCROP.**

## **How are they stored?**

Potatoes store best at low temperatures, but not below freezing. They should be stored in the dark and out of draughts or large temperature fluctuations. Storage in paper (not plastic) or hessian sacks in a shed or garage is best.

## **We recommend the following varieties..**

EARLIES.....	Pentland Javelin, Maris Bard, Rocket
SECOND EARLIES.....	Charlotte, Estima and Kestrel (reputedly slug resistant).
MAINCROP.....	Cara, Desiree
SALAD POTATOES.....	Pink Fir Apple

We stock more varieties than you will find in most, if not any other, garden centre in Somerset. So why not try a different variety or two. We sell them **loose** or in prepacks.

## **Growing potatoes under black polythene**

Instead of 'earthing up', some gardeners grow their potatoes under black polythene sheeting. Merely plant your tubers 2-3" deep and cover with black polythene. Weight the edges down to exclude light. When the shoots are produced, cut slits in the polythene to let the shoots grow through. When ready, just roll the sheet back and gather the tubers from underneath. However, slugs like this system too, so scatter some slug pellets when planting!!

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