

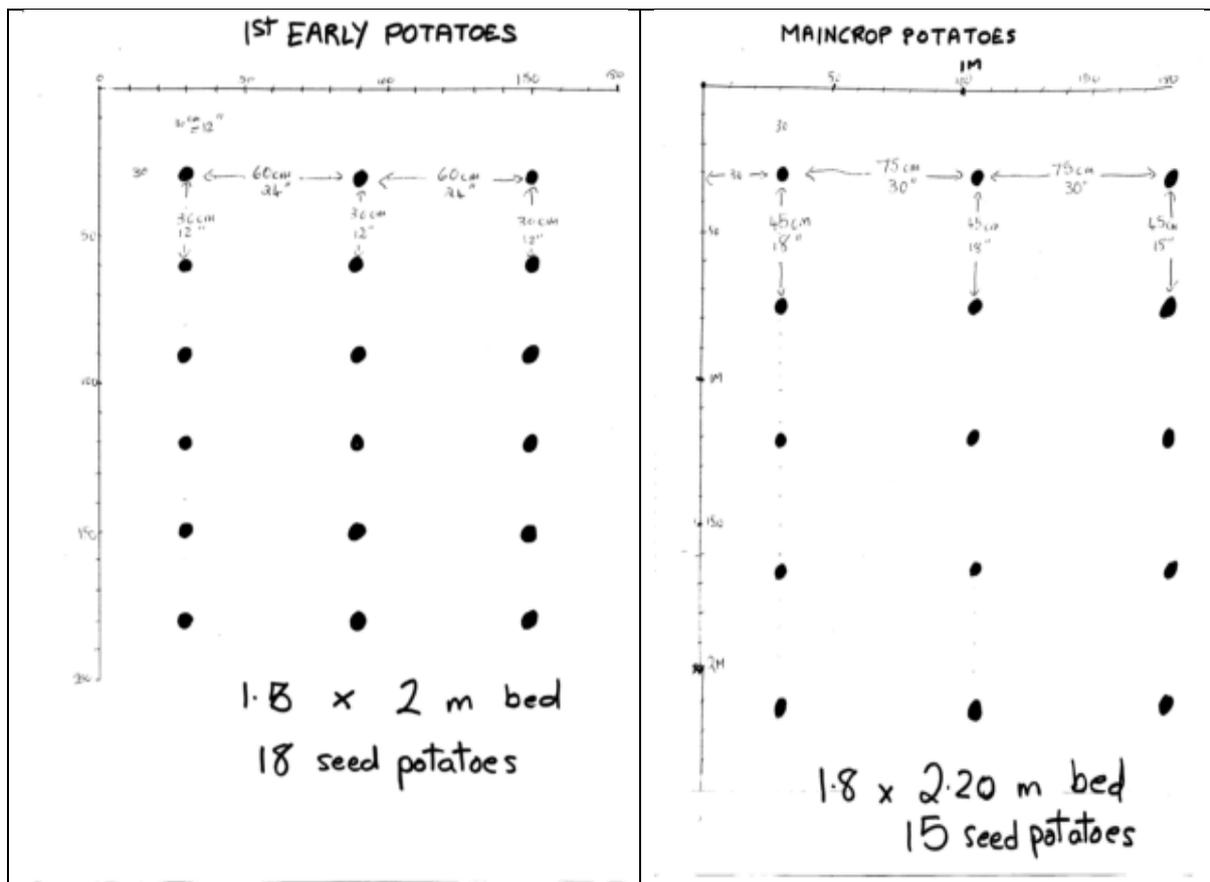
All about Potatoes

By Lesley Woodward & Bob Corfield

We get frequent questions in the shop on how to cultivate potatoes (which are, in fact, some of the easiest crops to grow). Here's some tips and advice.

1. Having purchased your seed potatoes from the shop they should then be chitted before planting out. Don't leave them in a bag - the chits will be long, white and brittle and will probably break off. You need nice green stumpy chits which you will get if you follow this advice from Lesley Woodward's [guide to chitting](#).

2. Planting out. Only plant out your seed potatoes so that when the hulms (the green planty bits that come out above the soil) emerge after all risk of frost has gone. Dig a trench about 4 to 6 inches deep and space the spuds out as shown in the diagrams below. It will help in their cultivation if you sprinkle potato fertilizer in the trench before you put the spuds in.



3. Once they're in the ground, you can sit back and await the arrival of hulms (4 - 6 weeks dependent upon soil temperature). Eventually, flowers will appear on the hulms (white, yellow or purple dependent on the variety). Watering - is key to getting a good crop. They need about 1" of water per week until the flowers appear then

dependent on rainfall they need about one and a half inches per week until leaves go yellow.

4. Earthing up. As the hulms grow, earth up the rows – it's fine to completely cover the hulms – they will push through. You will need to do this two or three times until you've got a raised the top about 10 inches to a foot above the original soil level. The aim is to give more room in the soil for the tubers to form. Any the form above the soil will be small green and poisonous.

5. Harvesting. First Earlies - probably about middle of June is the median date but can be earlier or later - normally when the flowers have died off.

Second Earlies - July to September.

Maincrop - September to October.

I normally do a test dig to see how they're getting on around the middle of June

6. Blight. This is the only serious problem you can have with potatoes - I issue blight warnings as I receive them from the Potato Council but this only happens from early Autumn onwards (normally) and I'll put up information on Blight later in the year.

I've called this page "All about potatoes" but there is a lot more on the internet about growing, harvesting, cooking and eating potatoes - Google "Growing potatoes" and you'll get a feast of information.