

POTATO GROWING GUIDE

PLANTING AND HARVESTING GUIDELINES

Maturity	Plant	Depth	Distance	Width Between Rows	Harvest
First Earlies	Mar - Apr	10cm (4in)	30cm (12in)	45cm (18in)	Jun - Aug
Second Earlies	Apr - May	10cm (4in)	30cm (12in)	45cm (18in)	Jul - Sep
Maincrop	Apr - May	10cm (4in)	37.5cm (15in)	67.5cm (27in)	Sep - Oct
Salads	Mar - Apr	10cm (4in)	22.5cm (9in)	45cm (18in)	Jul - Sep

Choosing Seed (Stage 1)

Always use Safe Haven certified seed potatoes due to their high health status! Look for the Red Tractor logo:



Chitting (Stage 2)

Place each seed potato in a shallow tray or egg tray in a cool, light, frost free place several weeks prior to planting. The seed will develop sprouts (chits) which will help them grow quickly once planted. This is a helpful but not essential process.

Soil Preparation & Planting (Stage 3)

Dig your potato plot in Autumn or Spring so the potatoes can easily be planted once soil temperatures are over 8°C. Plant the potatoes as per the guidelines in the table above.



STAGE 3

STAGE 4

STAGE 5

STAGE 6

Earthing-up (Stages 4&5)

When potatoes have emerged a few inches, pull earth around the plant with a rake, leaving peaked rows. Earthing-up gives the plant more soil to grow in, stops sunlight turning exposed tubers green and improves drainage. It is also a quick and effective way of controlling weeds. Repeat the process as required, until the foliage is too big.

Harvesting (Stage 6)

These are guidelines dependant on planting date and growing conditions.

Earlies—65-100 days

Second Earlies—100-130 days

Maincrop—125-180 days

First Earlies are best enjoyed when they are small and fresh in June/July/August and Second Earlies follow on. Maincrop varieties are best left until October for size and skin set. Once the Maincrop foliage has died back the potatoes should be left in the ground for 2-3 weeks to allow the skins to set, ready for storing. Before harvesting, carefully scrape away some soil and check the potatoes have grown to the size that you like.

Storing

Dry the tubers by laying them on the soil for a few hours once you've dug them up. Some varieties (generally Maincrop) keep well and will remain dormant and not start sprouting until April. Storage conditions should be cool, frost free, airy and away from light as this can cause greening. Hessian sacks allow for excellent air circulation, paper sacks are good but avoid plastic.

Blight

Join the "Fight Against Blight", a campaign to help gardeners avoid the disappointment of blight. Get the latest information and tips from www.potato.org.uk/blight.

Growing Tips

Why not have a look at www.wcfhorticulture.co.uk for loads of great information on varieties, growing and harvesting tips.

GROWING IN CONTAINERS

A container 45cm(18in) deep and 40cm(16in) in diameter holds 2 seed potatoes.

Fill the base with 10cm(4in) of compost mixed with perlite or gravel to add drainage. Add the seed potatoes and cover with 10cm(4in) of compost. As the plant grows, keep adding compost. The plant will grow through the compost and continue to form potatoes. When the plant reaches the top of the container, allow it to grow normally. Harvest when the potatoes have reached the desirable size (check by feeling through the compost). Water well but take care not to overwater.