



## Potatoes

Type	Weeks From Plant To Crop	Start To Plant	Dig	Spacing Between Plants	Spacing Between Rows
1 <sup>st</sup> Earlies	10	March	May/June/July	30cm	50-60cm
2 <sup>nd</sup> Earlies	13	March/April	July/August	30cm	50-60cm
Main Crop	15	April	July-October	35cm	75cm

### How To Grow Potatoes In The Ground:

1. Lay out your seed potatoes on trays or in egg boxes, placing each potato rose end up. Keep them in a frost-free environment (no warmer than about 15°C).
2. When April arrives, it's time to plant your potatoes. They should have good shoots, so make sure your soil is not too wet or frozen before you plant. Plant those 10cm (4in) deep with the eyes facing upwards.
3. When the shoots appear above the surface, draw the soil over them with a hoe to create a ridge. If frost is forecast, cover exposed shoots.
4. Water the crop well (the soil rather than the leaves) and scatter a general fertiliser around the base of the plants in May, June and July.
5. After about 10-12 weeks, carefully sink a fork underneath one potato to see if the crop is ready.

### Growing Potatoes In Containers:

1. Start with a large container, ideally at least 45cm (18in) wide. Place the container in a sunny position and fill the container with compost. Make sure to fill it up to within 20cm (8in) from the top of the container.
2. In early April, place the seed potatoes rose end up. About 2 seed potatoes will more than fill a 45cm (18in) pot.
3. Just cover the potatoes with more compost and water them in. If a late frost is forecast, cover the pot and move it to a sheltered position.
4. Keep covering the new shoots with compost as they grow, covering them each time. Repeat this process until the compost has reached the top of the container.
5. Feed the crop with a general fertiliser each week from May to July and check the water level each day. Check the size of the tubers underneath the compost at the end of summer and harvest when they feel big enough.

### Potato Dictionary:

- Chitting – Placing the potatoes in trays or boxes in good light to encourage them to sprout.
- Earthing Up – Covering the potato shoots with soil after planting so the tubers aren't exposed to light.
- Eye – Another word for an emerging shoot on a seed potato.
- Rose End – The end of the seed potato with the most 'eyes' – often the widest end.
- Tuber – A swollen stem, which is why it goes green in the light.
- First Early – Potatoes that are planted early and harvested in the summer for 'new' potatoes.
- Second Early – Varieties of potatoes planted a few weeks after first earlies, a later summer crop.
- Main Crop – Potatoes which are planted early and left in the ground until autumn.

### Growing Tips:

- If space is limited, stick to the earlier varieties, as they take up less room.

- If the soil has not been cultivated for several years, look out for wireworm. Reduce potential damage by growing earlier varieties and lifting them promptly for the first few years.
- In the dry years, cropping will be reduced unless you irrigate. Take care when watering as wet foliage on warm days encourages blight.

### **How To Harvest:**

- Leave main crop varieties in the soil for as long as possible to give tubers time to bulk up. Cut off the tops about two weeks earlier to promote stronger skins.
- Pick a dry spell to lift your potatoes and use a fork, taking care not to damage them.
- Store the dry potatoes in a cool, dark, dry place in a potato sack or hessian bag.

### **Potato Cropping Types:**

#### First Early Potatoes-

- ❖ Ideal for growing in containers/bags.
- ❖ Best if you want to grow small/new potatoes.
- ❖ Plant between March to late May.
- ❖ Ready to harvest approximately 10 weeks from planting date.
- ❖ Will benefit from chitting prior to planting.

#### Second Early Potatoes-

- ❖ Ideal for growing in containers/bags.
- ❖ Best if you want to grow small/new potatoes.
- ❖ Plant between March to late May.
- ❖ Ready to harvest approximately 13 weeks from planting date.
- ❖ Will benefit from chitting prior to planting.

#### Main Crop Potatoes-

- ❖ Best grown in the ground where there is room to grow, but container planting is possible.
- ❖ Tends to produce larger potatoes which are ideal for roasting/baking.
- ❖ Plant between March to mid-May.
- ❖ Ready to harvest approximately 20 weeks from planting date.
- ❖ Will benefit from chitting prior to planting.

#### Second Cropping Potatoes (Autumn)-

- ❖ Plant up in containers/bags during early August.
- ❖ Also known as Christmas potatoes as they can be lifted early and stored ready for your Christmas dinner.
- ❖ Must be protected from frosts! Bring them into a greenhouse or garden shed when a risk of frost threatens. This makes the idea of potato growing bags, as they can be easily moved.
- ❖ Ready to harvest approximately 11 weeks from planting date.
- ❖ These varieties do not require chitting.