



## **GROWING GREAT POTATOES**

Home grown 'spuds' cannot be beaten. They are high yielding and compared to supermarket varieties are more nutritious, tastier and free of pesticides, herbicides and sprouting inhibitors.

Our potato seed is certified, meaning it is grown by certified growers using standards to minimise the incidence of pest and disease. Store your seed potato in a cool, dry place out of the sun.

### ***GROWING NOTES:***

Potatoes are one of the easiest and most rewarding vegetables for gardeners. They tolerate a wide variety of soils and produce an abundance of food that can usually be stored.

### ***When to plant***

For an early crop, plant out seed two weeks before last frost. The main crop can then be planted in late October. Potatoes love a sunny, well-drained position in your garden, preferably sheltered from strong winds. Choose a spot that has not had potatoes grown for at least 3 years.

### ***Seed Preparation***

Small potato seed (40-60g) are called singles and can be planted as they are. Larger potatoes can be cut into 60-90g 'sets' with 2-3 'eyes' on each section, which is where the vines will sprout. Some old timers dust the cut with cement and plant out, others let the cuts seal for 24 hours in sunlight before planting. To encourage early sprouting, and less chance of the seed rotting in the soil if the weather turns cold and damp, many home gardeners 'chit' their seed. Chitting is done by laying out the potato seed four weeks prior to planting in bright light (not direct sunlight) at about 12-16°C. Once the sprouting has started you need to handle the potatoes carefully so you do not break the sprouts off.

### ***Garden Preparation***

Prepare rows by loosening soil 30cm deep and 30cm wide. Prepare rows 60-90 cm apart. Mix in compost and a handful of lime and blood and bone per metre of row. Plant seed 4 cm deep with 30-40 cm apart between plants.

When vine has grown to 10 cm start 'hilling up' either side of the plant with soil (and compost and straw for a bigger yield) and weed as you go.

Hilling up every two weeks until flowering finishes ensures a larger crop, stops the potatoes from turning green and protects them from potato moth. The mound should be 30cm+ high by the end of January. Water regularly while growing, stop watering 2 weeks prior to harvest.

### ***Harvest***

'New' potatoes can be eaten when the plants are in flower by 'bandicooting' around the vines and pulling out what's needed for dinner. These new potatoes do not store well. When flowering has finished the potatoes will be of a decent size. Stop all watering to let them dry out and their skins harden. Harvest the last of the crop once the plant has died (usually early autumn).

### ***Storage***

Once harvested, place potatoes in a hessian bag or a cardboard box and store them in a cool, dark place with good ventilation. Cover the bag or box to exclude as much light as possible.

### ***No Dig Method***

Tasmania's own garden guru Peter Cundall recommends this method for growing, especially for a new vegetable patch over grass. When the potatoes have finished you are left with a beautiful, friable garden bed with no weeds. Prepare potato seed sets. Mow down any long growth (if any) and put the seed on the surface of the ground in rows 30cm apart. Space the rows about 60cm apart. Cover the entire bed with 50cm of straw with large overlaps at the edges. Water well to settle the straw. Then cast a handful of blood and bone with 10% potash over every square metre of the bed. Spread a couple of shovelfuls of any animal manure per square meter over the top. Water well again. The height of the straw should have reduced by about half. In 3-4 weeks the first leaves will appear. If the mulch appears thin and sunlight is getting through to the tubers add more straw or 'hill up'. Harvest as described above.

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