# POTATO GROWING GUIDE

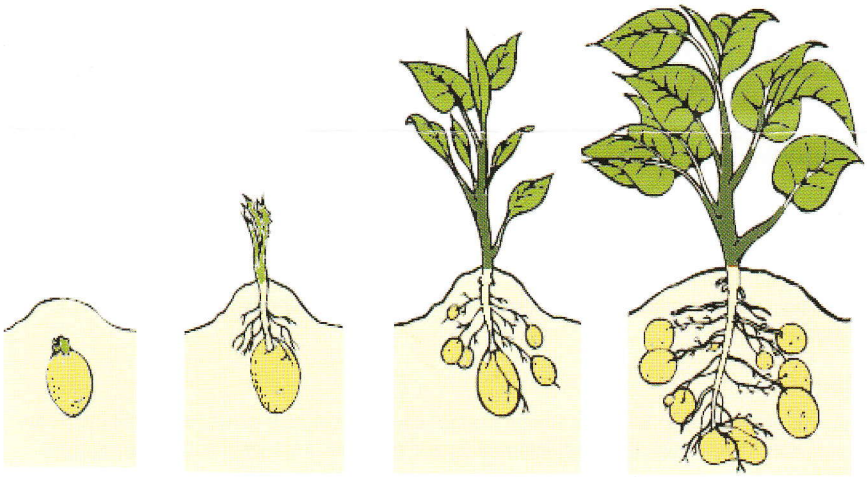
## Choosing Seed (Stage 1)

Always use healthy classified seed potatoes! Classified Basic Seed Potatoes are the highest grade of seed potatoes available.

Check the label on your seed potatoes – it should show the classification number, grade, size, certifying authority and many other details. Be very suspicious if labels are not present or if the label does not contain all the legally required information.

## Chitting (Stage 2)

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



STAGE 3 STAGE 4 STAGE 5 STAGE 6

## Soil Preparation & Planting (Stage 3)

Growing potatoes is easy! Dig the potato plot in autumn or spring, so that seed potatoes can be easily planted once soil temperatures are over 8°C. See table on reverse for comprehensive planting information.

## Earthing-up (Growing) (Stage 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)

**Earlies** - 85-100 days
**Second Earlies** - 100-130 days
**Maincrop** - 125-180 days
**These are guidelines dependant on planting date and growing conditions**

Before harvesting, carefully scrape away some soil and check that the potatoes have grown to the size that you like.

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.

## Planting and Harvesting Guidelines

| Maturity | Plant | Depth | Distance | With Between Rows | Harvest |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| First Earlies | March - April | 10cm (4in) | 30cm (12in) | 45cm (18in) | June - August |
| Second Earlies | April - May | 10cm (4in) | 30cm (12in) | 45cm (18in) | July - September |
| Maincrop | April - May | 10cm (4in) | 37.5cm (15in) | 67.5cm (27in) | September - October |
| Salads | March - April | 10cm (4in) | 30cm (12in) | 45cm (18in) | July - September |

## Storing

Dry the tubers by laying them on the soil for a few hours once you've dug them up. Some varieties (generally Maincrop) are good keepers and will remain dormant and not start sprouting until April.

The 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 Potato Council campaign to help gardeners avoid the disappointment of blight. Get the latest information and great tips from www.potato.org.uk/blight.

## Growing Tips

Why not have a look on www.wcf-phoenix.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.

## Planting

Fill the base with 10cm (4in) of compost mixed with perlite to aid 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 desired size (check by feeling through the compost). Water well but take care not to overwater.