

How to grow Seed Potatoes

An essential
guide for
growing
potatoes

marshalls

marshallsgarden.com

Thank you for buying your seed potatoes from us at Marshalls.

We go to great lengths to make sure our seed potatoes are of the finest quality, giving you the best possible chances of a great harvest. Over the next few pages, you'll find our top tips on growing potatoes, from how to plant, feed, store as well as protect from common pests and diseases, and you can also find all the help you need on our website. Our team of experts are always happy to answer your questions. Whether you're a first time potato grower or have years of experience behind you, we aim to help you make this year your best harvest yet!

Happy gardening!
The Marshalls Team

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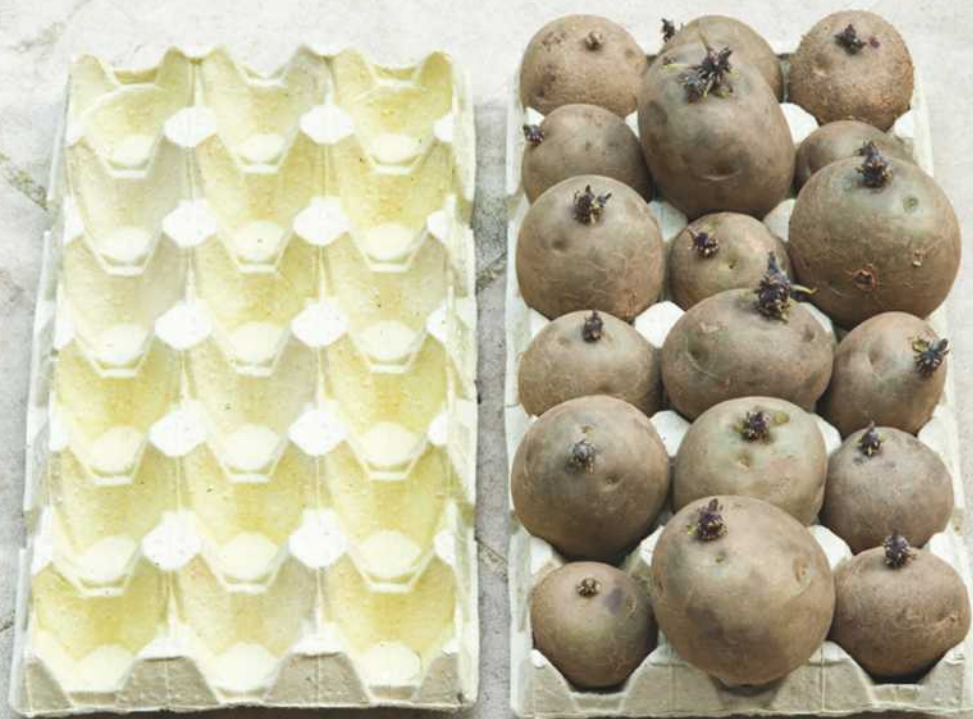
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Our Guarantee

Our high-quality seed potatoes have been specially selected by our experts for their flavour and reliability. They're all grown in the UK and hold DEFRA or SEERAD certification. Our certified growers undergo regular checks to make sure they have the right processes in place and that the seeds they produce are of a high standard. This means you can be confident that the seed potatoes you receive from us are premium grade and will grow true to variety, with all the characteristics you expect.

Marshalls seed potatoes are also certified under the Safe Haven Certification Scheme; they're grown only from Safe Haven-sourced seed or disease-free stock, which helps protect against any pests and diseases not native to Britain that affect potatoes.

This scheme was set up in 2004 by the British seed industry, and involves annual audits and processes to ensure that seed grown within the scheme is disease-free. It's internationally recognised as being a guarantee of quality, so you can rest assured that the seed potatoes you receive from us are strong and healthy.



Pre-planting advice

What are potato tubers?

Potatoes are grown in the ground from small seed potatoes, called tubers. These are small, soft potatoes which sometimes have 'eyes' on them - the spots from where the green stems start to grow.

If you've ever left potatoes for too long in the vegetable rack, you'll have seen this process happening when the 'eyes' start to sprout shoots. The tubers also act as storage units, containing the nutrients that young potato plants need to grow and develop roots, stems and leaves.

What is chitting?

'Chitting' potatoes involves deliberately allowing the potato tubers to develop small shoots before planting them. It is particularly useful for potatoes that crop early (also known as First and Second Early potatoes), as it gives them a bit of a head start on growing. This means they are ready to harvest earlier than they would otherwise be, and

they produce more potatoes. It's less important to chit maincrop potatoes, but still a good idea.

How to chit your tubers

1. Place them in a container - empty egg cartons work well for this - with the ends that have the most eyes facing upwards.
2. Leave the boxes in a cool, bright, frost-free place for 4-6 weeks while the shoots are growing.
3. The shoots should be pale green in colour - if they are spindly and white, it means they are not getting enough light. If this happens, remove these shoots and move the box to a brighter location to develop stronger shoots.
4. Once the shoots are about 2.5cm (1in) long, your potatoes are ready to plant.
5. Before planting, rub off all but the strongest 3-4 shoots from each tuber. This allows all the tuber's food stores to be focused on these remaining shoots, producing strong plants and a good harvest.

How to plant seed potatoes

Maincrop potatoes are best grown in the ground, but if you don't have space for this you can still grow first and second early potatoes in containers or bags.

In the ground

Plant your potatoes in rich soil in full sun, avoiding frost pockets. Ideally, dig plenty of well-rotted farmyard manure into the soil in autumn ready for planting in spring.

1. Before planting in spring, clear the ground of any weeds, rake it level and tread over it lightly to firm.
2. Dig narrow 15cm (6in) deep trenches, spaced 60cm (24in) apart for first earlies and 70cm (28in) apart for all other potatoes.
3. Scatter some fertiliser into each trench, we'd recommend using Marshalls Pre-planting Potato Fertiliser.
4. Place the chitted potatoes inside the trench, shoots pointing upwards, and cover with soil before watering well. Within weeks you should see green shoots emerging through the soil. This means your seed potatoes are rooting nicely.
5. If there's a risk of frost, protect the young plants by covering them with cloches or horticultural fleece.



In bags or containers

When growing first and second early potatoes in containers, choose large containers at least 30cm (12in) deep, ideally deeper, with good drainage. If growing in bags, cut holes at the bottom of the bag for drainage. Place a 15cm (6in) layer of compost in the pot or bag, scatter in some Marshalls Pre-planting Potato Fertiliser, then push the seed potatoes in and cover them over with more compost.

We recommend placing your bags in a sunny position, keeping a close eye on the soil and watering if experiencing dry weather.

When the plants are 15-20cm (6-8in) tall, add more compost to the container or bag to cover them. Repeat this as the plants grow, until the container or bag is full.


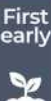
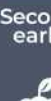










Top Tip - Earthing Up


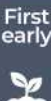
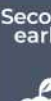
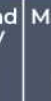







Once shoots have grown to about 20cm high, create a ridge around them by drawing up the soil, leaving the top few centimetres showing. Earthing up encourages more production, and keeps light from the developing tubers, stopping them turning green and becoming poisonous.



Our varieties

Varieties	Type						Suitable for				
											
Albert Bartlett 'Anya'					✓						✓
Albert Bartlett 'Apache'			✓						✓		
Albert Bartlett 'Isle of Jura'				✓				✓	✓		
Albert Bartlett 'Osprey'			✓					✓			✓
Albert Bartlett 'Purple Majesty'				✓				✓	✓	✓	✓
Albert Bartlett 'Rooster'				✓			✓	✓	✓		✓
Albert Bartlett 'Vivaldi'			✓					✓		✓	
'Accord'		✓					✓				✓
'Acoustic'			✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
'Arran Victory' (Organic)				✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
'Bambino' (Organic)				✓							✓
'Belle de Fontenay'					✓						✓
'British Queen'		✓							✓		
'Caledonian Pearl'					✓						✓
'Caledonian Rose'				✓			✓		✓		✓
'Cara'	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
'Charlotte'	✓		✓		✓				✓		✓
'Colleen' (Organic)		✓									✓
'Desiree'	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
'Duke of York'		✓							✓		
'Elfe'			✓					✓		✓	✓
'Estima'		✓						✓			
'Foremost'		✓									✓
'Gemson'		✓									✓
'Golden Wonder'				✓			✓	✓	✓		
'Home Guard'		✓						✓	✓	✓	✓
'Innovator'			✓				✓	✓	✓		✓
'Jazzy'			✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓
'Kerrs Pink'		✓							✓		✓

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Varieties	Type						Suitable for				
											
'Kestral'		✓				✓	✓		✓	✓	
'King Edward'	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓		
'Maris Bard'		✓									✓
'Maris Peer'	✓		✓								✓
'Maris Piper'	✓			✓			✓		✓	✓	
'Markies'		✓				✓		✓	✓		✓
'Marvel'				✓			✓	✓	✓		✓
'McCain Premier'		✓					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
'McCain Royal'				✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	
'McCain Shepody'				✓			✓	✓		✓	✓
'Nadine'			✓								✓
'Nicola'		✓				✓			✓		✓
'Pentland Javelin'		✓					✓		✓	✓	✓
'Picasso'				✓		✓		✓			✓
'Pink Fir Apple'	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
'Ratte'		✓								✓	✓
'Record'				✓			✓		✓	✓	
'Red Duke of York'	✓	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓	
'Rocket'					✓	✓					✓
'Salad Blue'			✓						✓	✓	✓
'Sante'				✓		✓		✓		✓	
'Sarlo Blue Danube'				✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	
'Sarlo Mira'	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		
'Sarlo Una'		✓				✓		✓			✓
'Sharpe's Express'		✓						✓			
'Stemster'				✓				✓	✓		✓
'Sunset'				✓					✓	✓	✓
'Swift'	✓	✓			✓						✓
'Wilja'			✓					✓		✓	✓



First early and second early potatoes

First and second early potatoes are, as the name suggests, the earliest potatoes to be planted in the year. Depending on the variety you choose and when you harvest, first and second earlies produce potatoes with firm waxy flesh and thin skins. They're delicious boiled and topped with salt and herb butter!

Early potatoes taste best when eaten straight after harvesting. They don't store well, so harvest them as you need them.

First early potatoes

Optimum planting time Mid to late March
Harvest June - July



We recommend placing cloches over the soil to protect the new plants from frost.

Space between tubers	Space between rows
25cm (10in)	60cm (24in)

Second early potatoes

Optimum planting time Late March - late April
Harvest June - August



These potatoes are slightly larger than first earlies but still keep their shape well once cooked, making excellent potatoes for salads. Protect them from frosts if necessary with cloches.

Space between tubers	Space between rows
37.5cm (15in)	70cm (28in)

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A few of our favourite first & second early potatoes:



'Swift'

One of the quickest early potatoes, producing a harvest in as little as 8 weeks from planting.



'Red Duke of York'

A heritage variety dating back to 1942, producing red-skinned tubers with yellow flesh and great flavour.



'Charlotte'

Good crops of uniform tubers, larger than most other early potatoes and excellent in salads.

Top Tip - Watering

After you've planted your seed potatoes, be careful not to water too much before you see the shoots, as they can rot if sat in waterlogged soil. Once in active growth, keep potatoes well-watered.



Maincrop and salad potatoes

Maincrop potatoes are usually large and floury, ideal for roasting and as chips or baked potatoes. Salad potatoes are large and firm. Unlike early potatoes, maincrops and salad potatoes have a much longer growing time and store well.

Maincrop and salad potatoes

Optimum planting time Late March - late April
Harvest August - October



Space between tubers	Space between rows
37.5cm (15in)	70cm (28in)

Did you know?

To help them go that bit further, during World War 2 it was common practice to cut larger seed potatoes in half. If you choose to do the same, we'd recommend leaving to dry out for 3-4 days before planting as normal.

A few of our favourite maincrop & salad potatoes:



'Pink Fir Apple'

Long, thin tubers with pink skin and superb flavour. A reliable variety that stores well.



'Maris Piper'

A well-known variety much in demand for making chips, mash and potato wedges.



'Sarlo Mira'

Big crops of tasty, floury potatoes. This variety has good resistance to blight and slugs.



Potato blight

Pests and diseases

Potato blight

Potato blight is a fungal disease that rots potato tubers. The early signs of blight infection are small dark spots on the leaf margins, and white mould on the undersides of affected leaves. As the infection develops, leaves turn brown and wilt. Stems develop brown patches where the leaves join them and purple or brown discolouration appears on the skins of the tubers.

To reduce the risk of blight, choose blight-resistant cultivars, and watch out for early signs of the disease. Remove any infected leaves immediately and bin or burn them. Don't put them on your compost heap, as the spores will survive to spread infection. If the disease has spread to the whole plant, cut it down and destroy it. Don't store infected tubers.

Top Tip

Some varieties of seed potatoes have been specially bred over the years to overcome common pests and diseases. We'd suggest trying 'Acoustic' and 'Una Mira'.



Potato blackleg

This is a bacterial disease causing the stem of the potato plant to turn black and decompose, followed rapidly by the tubers. Leaves turn yellow as the stem dies, and the plants and potatoes often smell bad. Potato blackleg is more common in wet summers. Remove any affected plants and destroy them, and don't store affected tubers.



Common scab

Scab is caused by a fungus, and results in marks on the skin of potato tubers. Although it can look unsightly, it doesn't affect the taste of the potato, so they can be eaten once peeled. Scab is more of a problem in dry conditions, and regular watering can help reduce the risk of infection. Don't store potatoes that have been affected by scab.



Slugs

Slugs can be a problem, especially in potatoes grown in heavy wet soil or next to grassy areas. Holes on the surface of the skin leading in to bigger holes inside the potato are an indication of slug damage. Slugs are more active in late autumn, so harvesting early can reduce the risk of damage.



Rot

Various bacteria and fungi can cause tubers to rot, either while still in the ground or in storage. To reduce the risk of rot, use certified tubers, and never plant damaged tubers. When harvesting, lift carefully to avoid damaging tubers, and don't store any that are damaged. Check growing crops regularly for signs of disease, and remove and destroy any affected plants as soon as possible. Pests and diseases can build up in the soil, so practice crop rotation and don't grow potatoes in the same beds in consecutive years.



Feeding, harvest & storage

Provided you are growing your potatoes in rich soil, they should not need any additional feeding, but regular watering is essential, especially during dry periods. Container-grown potatoes will need watering more frequently than those planted in the ground.

First and second early potatoes should be ready to harvest once the flowers have opened, but check first by digging carefully around the roots of the plant to see how big the potatoes are.

Maincrops are ready to harvest once the leaves turn yellow. Cut the plants down and leave them for around 10 days, then gently lift the potatoes using a garden fork. Leave the potatoes on the ground for a few hours to dry, then store them in a cool dark place in hessian sacks.

Preparing for next year

Once you've harvested your potatoes, it's time to start planning for next year's crop. Potato pests and diseases can build up in the soil, so it's a good idea not to plant potatoes in the same area year after year. In many crop rotation schemes, potatoes are grown in areas that have previously been used for brassicas such as broccoli or kale.

Potatoes need a rich, well-drained soil in full sun. Start preparing your potato bed in autumn by clearing it of weeds and stones and digging in plenty of well-rotted farmyard manure. This helps to improve the soil structure and drainage. The manure will be broken down over winter by worms and other soil organisms, ready for a new season of potato planting in the following spring.

Top Tip – Soil Replenishment

We'd recommend digging in some Marshalls Organic Extra – a 100% natural, super concentrated fertiliser and soil improver – when you start preparing your site for next year's growing. It will add essential nutrients to the soil that your crops have taken in over the course of the year, replenishing it in time for a fresh start to the season.



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