

South Harpenden Allotments and Gardens Society

Seed Potatoes 2024 + Growing Notes

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Sales of the blight-resistant *Sarpo* varieties have been very poor. We have, therefore, decided not to stock them this year.

Our merchant has informed us that the following varieties have failed for various reasons: International Kidney (aka Jersey Royal), Anya, Valor. We have tried to fill these gaps with other recommended varieties – see below.

Crop failure is mentioned increasingly in these notes. We obtain our seed potatoes from a merchant in Scotland, as do most growers in the UK, because the risk of disease in Scottish soils is much less than elsewhere. However, the weather in Scotland in the last two years has been erratic – unusual heat and torrential rain. Many growers have seen their fields flooded or otherwise affected. We do our best to offer alternatives to those varieties which have failed. Some of these are more modern varieties and have better disease resistance, greater yields etc. We commend them to you.

Potato Diseases:

Blight: We get lots of questions in the shop at potato selling time about this serious disease of both potatoes and tomatoes (*Suttons Seeds claim to have the world's first blight resistant tomato – 'Crimson Crush' see: <http://suttons.co.uk> for further information*). Blight is caused by a soil-borne fungus (*Phytophthora infestans*), the spores of which overwinter in UK soils. There are many strains of the fungus and no potatoes or tomatoes are entirely resistant to one or the other of them, but see above. It is not possible to kill off the fungus spores in the soil. Blight is a much greater menace to second earlies and – especially – main crop varieties of potato and to outdoor tomatoes, i.e. those crops which spend the longest time in the soil, than it is to the earlier maturing varieties. However, blight CAN strike very early under the right conditions. If you want to keep up-to-date see: <http://www.adhb.org.uk/blightspy> (this has replaced Blightwatch).

Bayer Garden Blight Control is a product available to the amateur gardener and suppliers can be found via the world wide web. **Like all such chemicals you should read the instructions very carefully especially in relation to the gap between application and consumption of the tubers.** It can help, with late blight, to remove all the leaves of the affected plants. However, this will likely affect yields. The affected foliage should be taken away and not added to your compost heap. Many websites recommend that it should be burned - not easy with wet foliage and one must bear in mind the Society's rules over bonfires.



The onset of potato blight

Eelworm/potato cyst nematodes: Similarly, most potatoes grown in the UK are susceptible to some degree to these pests, of which there are many forms. There is little you can do about eelworm/nematodes except to leave a gap of 3 to 4 years before you grow potatoes again in the same location. Earthing up is supposed to offer some protection but the evidence for this is poor.



The cyst nematodes are the yellow spheres on the roots

Scab: The causes of potato scab are still the subject of debate. Although unsightly, the scabs are easily removed by peeling and the potatoes are edible. Control is best done by NOT liming the soil and by making sure that the crop is well-watered during tuber growth, i.e. during the last 6 to 8 weeks of the growing cycle.



Blackleg: is caused by the bacterium *Pectobacterium atrosepticum* and only affects potatoes. It is one of the earliest potato diseases to appear, sometimes as early as June, especially in wet years. You may see the following symptoms: as early as June the stems of potato plants appear stunted and pale green or yellow, leaves at the top of affected stems may be small, stiff and have margins curled inwards. At ground level, these affected stems appear black and rotted, and if tubers form, the flesh may be grey or brown and rotten. Control is mostly by lifting and destroying any infected plants, by rotation of potatoes, by buying only certified seed. Charlotte is noted for its resistance to blackleg. There are no chemical controls.



Blackleg affecting the lower parts of stems

Spraing: is a disease that affects only the potato tubers and causes brown streaks in the flesh. Spraing is most commonly caused by two viruses, tobacco rattle virus (TRV) which is transmitted by

nematodes, or potato mop top virus (PMTV) transmitted by the powdery scab fungus *Spongospora subterranea*. Control of the disease is generally by ensuring that seed is disease free although the strain transmitted by nematodes can be controlled to some extent by the use of nematicides.



Spraing affecting tubers

Waxy versus Floury: the only **floury** potatoes that we have this year are **King Edward** and **Maris Piper** – and even these are nowhere near as floury as the potatoes which you get, for example, in Ireland. Most of our potatoes have some degree of ‘waxiness’ but, probably, the waxiest varieties **are: Caledonian Pearl, Charlotte, La Ratte and La Belle de Fontenay**. Some people regard **Wilja** as intermediate between waxy and floury.

Liming: this is, or was, regarded as almost essential for the growing of decent potatoes. The practice arose because potatoes were often grown in very organic soils or very sandy soils, and these soils are generally quite acid; hence liming could be of benefit (there is a whole range of interactions between the acidity of a soil and other nutrient components). There is also some belief that liming gives potatoes with stronger skins but this is disputed. By and large the soils on our allotments are not particularly acid so liming is not necessary in our soils.

The Shop: We expect to be selling the following varieties in the shop in 2024. **As of last year, we have ordered mostly those potatoes which seem to sell consistently well BUT also some newer varieties to replace those unavailable this year and in response to members’ requests.** Supplies will be limited and once they are sold out, we cannot get any more.

Growing guide

STORAGE
After purchase, carefully empty seed potato contents into shallow boxes or trays. Egg boxes or apple trays are ideal. Protect from frost and store in a cool area.

POTATO

GROWING GUIDE



1. CHITTING

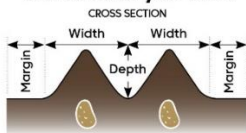
Two weeks before planting move the potatoes into natural light and a temperature of about 10°C (50°F). Sprouts should appear. This step is optional, but may improve grow time. The potatoes may turn green when exposed to light, this is normal. Protect from frost.

2. PLANTING

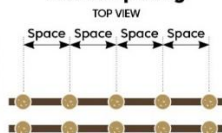
Dig your potato plot in Autumn or Spring so the potatoes can easily be planted once soil temperatures are over 8°C. See packaging for specific variety guide, or estimate below.

MATURITY	PLANT	DEPTH	WIDTH	MARGIN	SPACE	HARVEST
First Early	Mar-Apr	15cm 6"	60cm 24"	30cm 12"	25cm 10"	June-Aug
Salad	Mar-May	15cm 6"	60cm 24"	30cm 12"	25cm 10"	July-Sept
Second Early	Apr-May	15cm 6"	70cm 28"	35cm 14"	30cm 12"	July-Sept
Maincrop	Apr-May	15cm 6"	70cm 28"	35cm 14"	37cm 15"	Sept-Oct

How to make your drills



Potato Spacing



3. GROWING

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. Use frost blankets, tunnels, or greenhousing to protect your crop from frost.

4. HARVEST

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.

 **PERISHABLE GOODS, PROTECT FROM FROST**

ONLINE GUIDE

Find the best way to grow & cook each variety here.



FIRST EARLIES: The rough (very rough) rule of thumb is that these are ready to harvest from about 80 – 90 days after planting. First Earlies do not store well and are best consumed fairly quickly.

ARRAN PILOT

SEED POTATOES



FIRST EARLY

PLANT Mar-April
HARVEST June-Aug

Harvest 10-12 weeks after planting subject to weather.



Arran Pilot is one of the nation's favourite varieties which has been around since 1930 and has remained popular due to its excellent taste. Pilot produces high yields of white skinned tubers with shallow eyes. The flesh is pure white and is among the best boilers available. Great resistance to all forms of scab and scores a high 9 for spraing resistance.

BEST SUITED CULINARY USES


 ✓ Boiling


 ✓ Baking


 ✓ Mashing


 ✓ Roasting



CERTIFIED STANDARDS FOR FARMS
SAFE HAVEN SCHEME

PREMIUM QUALITY - GROWN IN BRITAIN

RED DUKE OF YORK

SEED POTATOES



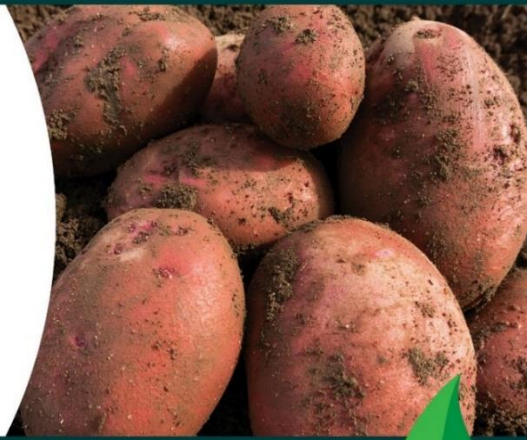
FIRST EARLY

PLANT Mar-April
HARVEST June-Aug

Harvest 10-12 weeks after planting subject to weather.

Red Duke of York are a heritage variety from 1942. The first Red Duke was said to be found in a crop of White Dukes in Holland. Red skinned tubers with shallow eyes and yellow flesh. Red Dukes are a dry mealy potato packed with flavour and do not disintegrate on boiling.

Winner of the RHS Award of Garden Merit.



BEST SUITED CULINARY USES



✓ Roasting



✓ Boiling



✓ Salad



PREMIUM QUALITY - GROWN IN BRITAIN

'SALAD' POTATOES

Salad potatoes are often thought of as the earliest to mature. Most are, in fact, First or Second Earlies or Maincrop varieties so can be left in the ground well into the Summer. Some **First Earlies** such as Caledonian Pearl are also grown as salad or new potatoes as are La Ratte and La Belle de Fontenay (see below). If you want small (new) potatoes, then dig them up earlier but yields can be small in terms of weight. Ready from about 80-90 days after planting.

CALEDONIAN PEARL

SEED POTATOES



FIRST EARLY

PLANT Mar-April
HARVEST June-Aug

Harvest 10-12 weeks after planting subject to weather.

Caledonian Pearl is a first early potato producing a wonderful crop of salad potatoes. It has good tuber shape and size, shallow eyes, with high tuber numbers and smooth skin. The skins harden off quickly allowing for an early harvest.



BEST SUITED CULINARY USES



✓ Boiling



✓ Roasting



✓ Salad



PREMIUM QUALITY - GROWN IN BRITAIN

CHARLOTTE

SEED POTATOES



SALAD

PLANT April-May
HARVEST July-Sept

Harvest 10-12 weeks after planting subject to weather.

Charlotte is now the most popular salad potato in the UK. Tubers of Charlotte are long with a yellow skin and firm yellow waxy flesh that make it a superb salad potato. Cooking qualities are excellent and the potatoes are full of flavour. Very good resistance to foliage and tuber blight. Charlotte is a popular variety for planting in August and harvesting before Christmas. Winner of the RHS Award of Garden Merit.



BEST SUITED CULINARY USES



✓ Salad



✓ Boiling



✓ Roasting



A **WAXY** salad variety better left to get slightly bigger than new potato size. Resistant to blackleg.

PINK FIR APPLE

SEED POTATOES



SALAD

PLANT March-April
HARVEST Aug-Sept

Harvest 20-24 weeks after planting subject to weather.

Pink Fir Apple is a heritage variety that is maintained by ISJ Horticulture. The tubers are long and knobbly and are best eaten with their skins on. They retain the new potato taste when they have been stored. Winner of the RHS Award of Garden Merit.



BEST SUITED CULINARY USES



✓ Salad



✓ Boiling



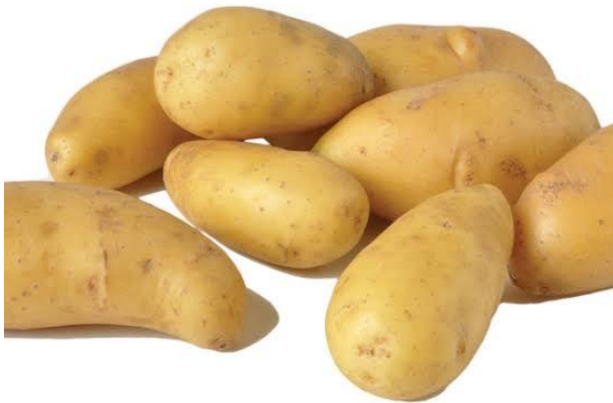
✓ Roasting



A Maincrop potato commonly grown as a salad potato. This is famously knobbly and can be a prolific cropper. Can also be left in the ground well into the Autumn when the tubers can get large. Many people describe it as the tastiest of potatoes. Others find the task of getting every last knobbly bit out

of the soil (very necessary if you don't want potatoes everywhere in the following year) and the labours of cleaning the tubers are great deterrents (you have been warned !!!).

La Belle de Fontenay: Long, pale yellow tubers that are notably waxy. Can be treated as a 'new' potato or a 'salad' variety. Has been described as the tastiest of potatoes.



SECOND EARLIES: As a very rough rule of thumb, ready about 100 to 120 days after planting. Note 'Rocket', nominally sold as a first early, is usually grown as a second early.

MARIS PEER

SEED POTATOES



SECOND EARLY

PLANT April-May
HARVEST July-Sept

Harvest 13-15 weeks after planting subject to weather.

Maris Peer produces strong, tall plants with an abundance of pretty purple flowers. Peer tubers are oval in shape with a firm creamy coloured flesh and white skin. Disease wise they have good resistance to all skin diseases. A variety that is suited for second cropping and harvesting at Christmas.



BEST SUITED CULINARY USES

-  ✓ Boiling
-  ✓ Roasting
-  ✓ Salad



CERTIFIED STANDARDS FOR FARMS SAFE HAVEN SCHEME

PREMIUM QUALITY - GROWN IN BRITAIN

ROCKET

SEED POTATOES



FIRST EARLY

PLANT Mar-April
HARVEST June-Aug

Harvest 10-12 weeks after planting subject to weather.

Rocket seed potatoes were first released in 1987 and were the quickest bulking of all early potatoes. Rocket's ability to grow large crops of uniformed round tubers made it very popular. Tubers have white flesh and skin with shallow eyes with and a mild taste. There is good resistance to blackleg, common scab and spraing. Harvesting Rocket before full maturity is recommended to avoid tubers cracking.



BEST SUITED CULINARY USES



✓ Boiling



✓ Salad



✓ Roasting



CERTIFIED STANDARDS FOR FARMS
SAFE HAVEN SCHEME

PREMIUM QUALITY - GROWN IN BRITAIN

WILJA

SEED POTATOES



SECOND EARLY

PLANT April-May
HARVEST July-Sept

Harvest 13-15 weeks after planting subject to weather.

Wilja was one of the first Dutch-bred varieties to change the rule book about second earlies. Wilja allowed large consistent crops of light yellow skinned tubers to be produced in a shorter time period. The flesh is yellow and firm with a texture between waxy and floury making it unusual.



BEST SUITED CULINARY USES



✓ Mashing



✓ Roasting



✓ Baking



✓ Boiling



CERTIFIED STANDARDS FOR FARMS
SAFE HAVEN SCHEME

PREMIUM QUALITY - GROWN IN BRITAIN

MARFONA

SEED POTATOES



SECOND EARLY

PLANT April-May
HARVEST July-Sept

Harvest 13-15 weeks after planting subject to weather.

Marfona is a high yielding variety which produces consistent large crops of waxy baking type potatoes. Tubers are oval in shape with a light yellow skin and cream coloured flesh. Large, smooth potatoes early in the season. Perfect for summer baked potatoes.



BEST SUITED CULINARY USES



✓ Baking



✓ Boiling



✓ Roasting



✓ Mashing



✓ Chipping



PREMIUM QUALITY - GROWN IN BRITAIN

MAINCROP: Ready after about 120 days. You can often leave these varieties in the ground until late September.

CARA

SEED POTATOES



MAINCROP

PLANT April-May
HARVEST Sept-Oct

Harvest 15-22 weeks after planting subject to weather.

Cara is still one of the most popular maincrop varieties due to its excellent blight resistance. Tubers are round with white skin and pink eyes. They are a very robust variety and have excellent drought resistance as well as good all round disease resistance.



BEST SUITED CULINARY USES



✓ Roasting



✓ Mashing



✓ Baking



✓ Boiling



PREMIUM QUALITY - GROWN IN BRITAIN

DESIREE

SEED POTATOES



MAINCROP

PLANT April-May
HARVEST Sept-Oct

Harvest 15-22 weeks after planting subject to weather.

Desiree produce oval red skinned tubers with pale yellow flesh. Heavy cropper and early bulking. High resistance to drought & good resistance to potato virus Y and powdery scab. Susceptible to potato cyst nematode and mis-shapes on heavy soils. Moderately susceptible to spraing and mild mosaic viruses. Medium dry matter, firm cooked texture, good boiling, frying and mashing quality.



BEST SUITED CULINARY USES



✓ Chipping



✓ Baking



✓ Boiling



✓ Roasting



✓ Mashing



PREMIUM QUALITY - GROWN IN BRITAIN

KING EDWARD

SEED POTATOES



MAINCROP

PLANT April-May
HARVEST Sept-Oct

Harvest 15-22 weeks after planting subject to weather.

King Edward are probably the most famous potato on the market, they are known for their excellent cooking and taste qualities. Once cooked they rarely discolour and offer a broad range of uses. Often copied but never beaten, that is why King Edward have been around for over a century.



BEST SUITED CULINARY USES



✓ Baking



✓ Chipping



✓ Boiling



✓ Roasting



✓ Mashing



PREMIUM QUALITY - GROWN IN BRITAIN

La Ratte: we have had many requests for this variety over the years but supplies in the UK have always been very limited. It is, by reputation, one of the tastiest potatoes available. It is also very waxy. It is an early maincrop or even a late second early. Because of its waxiness it can also be grown as a 'salad' potato. Yields are reputed to be good.



MARIS PIPER

SEED POTATOES



MAINCROP

PLANT April-May
HARVEST Sept-Oct

Harvest 15-22 weeks after planting subject to weather.

Extremely popular and well known, it is the cooking and frying qualities of Piper that makes this potato stand out from the rest. The tubers are oval with a white skin and cream coloured flesh. It is also a good long-term storing potato.



BEST SUITED CULINARY USES



✓ Chipping



✓ Roasting



✓ Baking



✓ Mashing



✓ Boiling



PREMIUM QUALITY - GROWN IN BRITAIN

PICASSO

SEED POTATOES



MAINCROP

PLANT April-May
HARVEST Sept-Oct

Harvest 15-22 weeks after planting subject to weather.

Picasso tubers are round to oval in shape with white smooth skins and pink eyes. This is now a popular variety for allotment growers due to its high disease resistance. With Cara as one of its parents it has a great range of uses in the kitchen. A huge yielder and good storing variety.



BEST SUITED CULINARY USES



✓ Chipping



✓ Baking



✓ Boiling



✓ Roasting



PREMIUM QUALITY - GROWN IN BRITAIN

Marvel: this potato is a newer variety and is a good substitute for Valor. It is an early maincrop and can be high yielding. It produces large potatoes that are perfect for baking, chips and wedges. It has a smooth cream-coloured skin with shallow eyes. Marvel has been found to be ideal for the unpredictable summers of the UK.

MARVEL

SEED POTATOES

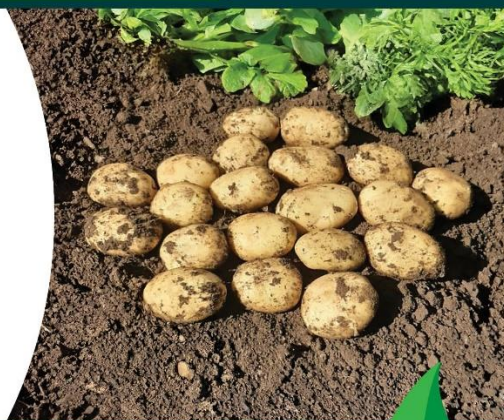


MAINCROP

PLANT April-May
HARVEST Sept-Oct

Harvest 15-22 weeks after planting subject to weather.

An early maincrop and a farmers' favourite, Marvel has been successfully grown commercially over the past few years and has proven to be very popular. It produces bold potatoes that are perfect for baking, chips, and wedges. A smooth cream coloured skin with shallow eyes makes it easy to peel. Marvel is found to be ideal in hot climates but adaptable and ideal for the unpredictable summers here in the UK! Expect high yields and tasty big potatoes.



BEST SUITED CULINARY USES



✓ Chipping



✓ Baking



✓ Boiling



✓ Roasting



✓ Mashing



PREMIUM QUALITY - GROWN IN BRITAIN

There is some further information at www.potatoes.agricrops.org. The cessation of the national potato levy in 2018 means that the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) no longer conducts its own trials. The website above contains the AHDB historical list plus information from breeders. There is no obligation on the latter to submit information so the list is now patchy and – in places – out of date, but is still a very useful starting point.