

# Time for Irish Potatoes

Adapted by Grace Emery

Irish Potatoes are a multi-seasonal crop in Texas. They are the most popular of all vegetables in America. Potatoes are easy to grow and to be successful at growing. Everyone needs to try them!

Varieties of Irish potatoes in Texas are:

Red Flesh: Dark Red Norland, Red LaSoda and Viking

White Flesh: Atlantic, Gemchip, Kennebec and Superior

Yellow Flesh: Yukon Gold

Russet: Century Russet, Norgold M, and Russet Norkatah

Potatoes need full sun and loose, well-drained soil. They also need to be watered often, so they are not a low water use crop. They should be fertilized when planting and then once a month after that.

Use only actual seed potatoes since they have not been treated with pesticides. Cut the seed potato in quarters, with one eye per piece and let harden or scab over for 5-6 days before planting.



To prepare your soil for potatoes, remove debris and rocks, add 4 inches of compost and work into the existing soil and level.

Dig a row about 4 inches deep. Plants need to be spaced 11 inches apart and rows should be 15 inches apart, to allow for good circulation. Place fertilizer in the holes and water it in, before adding the seed potato with eyes up. Soak the planted potato rows well because they need constant moisture during the growing season, which will be 95 to 110 days. Compost and mulch well. *Remember to fertilize once a month!* Because all tubers produced on the potato will grow above the seed potato, you need to add more compost/soil mix as it grows, so critters will not find them. Potato plants do flower but the flowers are not edible.

Potatoes in raised beds

Photo: Grace Emery

If you do not have a raised bed, you can grow potatoes on your deck in a pot or a potato bag. You can use many different types of containers to grow potatoes, such as buckets, trash cans, whiskey barrels, potato bags, raised bed or a large water trough.

Or perhaps find a large basket or medium/large bucket, cut good drainage holes and place it in a sunny place on the ground. The Red LaSoda variety is good for containers. Fill the basket with 4-5 inches of compost and soil, wet and fertilize, and plant the seed potatoes with eyes up, firming down to make sure they are secure in the soil. Add another 4 inches of the soil over them. As the green plants emerge, add more soil as they grow. When it is harvest time, dump out the basket and you can easily harvest your potatoes.



Potato Bags  
Photo: Grace Emery

Many insects like potatoes too. Most common insects are Flea Beetles, Colorado Potato Beetles, Aphid, Wireworms and Leafhopper. The best defense is to keep a close watch in your potato garden so you find them before severe infestation occurs. Sevin, a synthetic, can be used or organic insecticides with BT and Sulfur. Insecticides can be found in most garden centers.

Harvest: Seed potatoes usually produce 5-6 pounds of potatoes per pound. Your potatoes are ready for harvest when the greenery begins to die, Do not water before you harvest, since the mud will stick to the potatoes. Gather the plant and pull straight up and place on a screen and shake, to get the potatoes to separate. You can use a pitchfork but keep it about 12 inches away from the plant, so no potatoes are stuck by the pitchfork. After cleaning, they should be placed in a cool, dry place to harden for 10 days. Then enjoy!



Yield from 2 plants  
Photo: Grace Emery

Potatoes are easy and fun to grow so why not try it?  
Seed potatoes are available in December/January at garden centers!

Additional Resources:

<https://bexarmg.org/may-we-help/vegetable-gardening/>

Specific Crops, Irish Potatoes

Bexar-tx.tamu.edu

<https://childrensvegetablegardenprogram.wordpress.com/>

info@bexarmg.org