



# South Dublin Allotments Association

## Laying out Potato Drills - Fact sheet No. 4

Although potatoes are considered one of the easier crops to grow it is essential to follow some basic steps in order to maximise the return for all of your efforts. Potatoes prefer well drained soil, although they can be grown in clay.

### Potatoes Varieties:

#### **First Early:**

First early potatoes have been traditionally planted on St. Patrick's day although depending on weather and soil conditions they can be planted from early March. Although sowing potatoes this early can leave the new growth vulnerable to frost damage, some gardeners cover the stalks with straw to prevent damage. First early potatoes can be lifted when flowering is finished.

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| <b>Arran Pilot:</b>      | -Traditional favourite with white flesh of firm waxy flavour.     |
| <b>Epicure:</b>          | -Very popular first early with white skin and creamy white flesh. |
| <b>Maris Bard:</b>       | -Smooth white skinned with traditional new potato flavour         |
| <b>Sharpes Express:</b>  | -Superb flavour floury new potato.                                |
| <b>Duke of York:</b>     | -Pale yellow tubers and dry mealy texture.                        |
| <b>Red Duke of York:</b> | -Good all round potato excellent for roasting.                    |
| <b>Home Guard:</b>       | -Creamy dry potato with white flowers.                            |

#### **Second Early:**

Can be sown from the first week in April.

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| <b>British Queen:</b>  | -Highly prized for its yield, flavour and texture.          |
| <b>Maris Peer:</b>     | -Superb flavour the creamy texture that retains its colour. |
| <b>Pink Fir Apple:</b> | -Pink skinned potato ideal for chips.                       |

#### **Main Crop:**

Can be sown from third week in April.

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| <b>Desiree:</b>       | - The world's most popular red potato. Good drought resistance. |
| <b>King Edward:</b>   | - Creamy white flesh ideal for roasting.                        |
| <b>Maris Piper:</b>   | - The chip shop favourite. Golden Eel resistant.                |
| <b>Rooster:</b>       | - Yellow dry flowery potato with red skin.                      |
| <b>Kerr Pink:</b>     | - An old favourite and still in demand.                         |
| <b>Golden Wonder:</b> | - One of the best varieties for roasting and frying.            |
| <b>Cara:</b>          | - Round oval pink tubers drought and disease resistant.         |

## **Preparing the ground**

The ground should be dug and cleared of all grass weeds and large stones. In order to get the best return well rotted farm yard manure or compost should be dug into the soil. Alternatively a proprietary fertiliser such as 7-6-17 can be used. Always buy good quality seed potato as you may run the risk of introducing plant disease. You may have to experiment over a number of years to establish which variety is best suited to your soil type.

## **Setting out drills**

Decide as to where you are locating your drills and how large an area you wish to use. Potatoes are normally sown 10 to 12 inches apart and a 5 kg bag contains approximately 60 potatoes. This will allow you to estimate the amount of seed potatoes you need to purchase.

In order to lay out the drills you will require a number of bamboo canes, some garden twine and a tape measure. Drills can vary in width from 24 inches to 36 inches. A drill of 28 inches is adequate for allotment growing. This will provide an adequate distance between the drills for both moulding up and spraying. Measure 14 inches out from the boundary at the top and bottom of the drill and insert the canes. This will indicate the centre of the first drill. You can now measure out an additional 28 inches and insert two more canes to identify the centre of the second drill Attach the twine to both canes in the first drill giving a straight line. The twine should be connected about 12 inches above the ground level.

Dig a trench 6 to 8 inches deep running the full length of the drill using the twine as a guide. If manure or compost have not been added to the soil you can now insert it into the trench. Place the potatoes in the trench 10 to 12 inches apart. If the potatoes have been chitted (contains shoots) plant the potatoes with the shoots facing upwards. Backfill the drill carefully to avoid removing the shoots.

Move the twine to about 8 inches from the top of the ground the drills can now be moulded up to the level of the twine. Additional moulding up of the drills will be necessary as the potatoes grow. Move to the second and subsequent drill and proceed as before.