

- **Which varieties of potatoes do well in the Victoria area? Can they be grown in pots or bags?**

Potatoes are a great way to grow your own food, with high yields, a variety of colours, shapes, and tastes, and that can be grown directly in the garden, large pots, or in bags. Gardeners plant 'seed' potatoes, not seeds, but rather small potato tubers which have been inspected to ensure they are free from diseases and insects. Do not plant supermarket potatoes as they may have been treated with growth inhibitor to prevent them from sprouting. Also, do not plant potatoes near tomatoes as they can share late-blight problems. Try to rotate your crops every year or at least every two years to prevent soil-borne insects and diseases from becoming an issue and use new planting soil in your pots and bags each year. Overall, the best defense for a healthy potato crop is to establish strong healthy plants by using disease free seeds, planting in rich soil and to avoid watering before your shoots emerge.

Victoria is hardiness zones 8-9 with some variation in areas with exposure to salt spray or strong winds. On average, Victoria's frost-free growing season starts around mid-April and ends around early November. Direct sow seed potatoes can be planted from mid-February to mid-March. Select a site with full sun, whether planting in a garden bed, pots, or bags, all in well-drained soil. Most varieties come pre-packaged but if buying from a bulk bin, choose ones with lots of eyes or indentations with lots of sprouts.

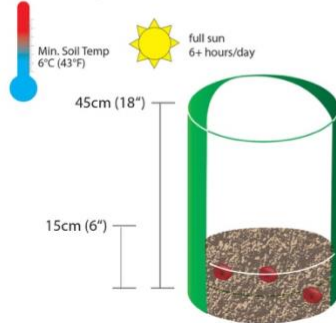
Local garden centres carry many potato varieties which have been selected to grow and produce well in our Victoria climate. Potatoes are grouped into first early, second early and maincrop potatoes. First and early potatoes are planted in early spring and second early potatoes a couple of weeks later. They are both harvested in the early to mid-summer. Warba is the standard early white potato and Norlands the early red, both maturing in about 80 days. The most reliable mid-season varieties are Yukon Gold, Red Pontiac, and Kennebec, all maturing in about 85 days. Maincrop potatoes are planted in mid-spring and take longer to mature than the early varieties, ready to harvest in late summer or early autumn before fall frosts arrive. The most reliable for our area is Netted Gem, now called Russet Burbank, with maturity in about 120 days. It is also tempting to choose some of the novelty varieties because of their smaller sizes, interesting shapes, and different colours. However, if experimenting, do not expect their yields to be as satisfactory as the older reliable varieties just noted.

How to grow potatoes in a grow bag



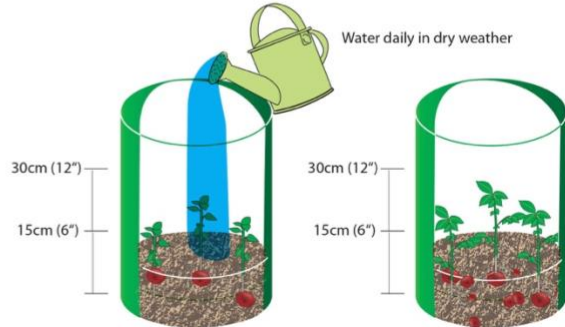
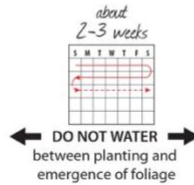
1 Place seed potatoes at bottom of grow bag

Cover potato seeds with 15cm (6") of soil



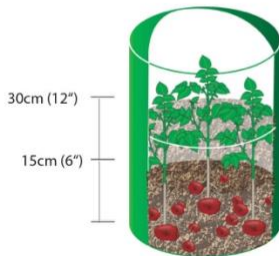
2 Grow until 12 inches above soil

Water daily in dry weather



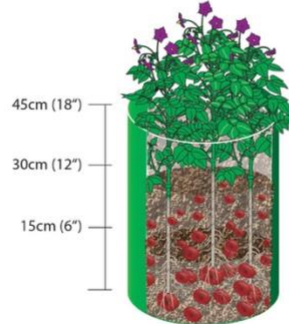
3 Hill up

When the plants have 30cm (12") of growth above the soil, add 15cm (6") more soil around the base of the plants (ok if it covers lower leaves).



4 Hill up again

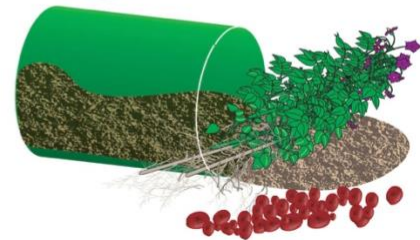
When the plants have grown another 30cm (12") above the soil, repeat the process. Add another 15cm (6") of soil around the base of the plants.



5 Harvest

"New" potatoes can be harvested about 7-8 weeks after planting.

Potatoes grown for late summer and fall use can be dug when tubers are full size or when foliage begins to die.



Sources:

West Coast Seeds "How to Grow Potatoes": illustration 'How to grow potatoes in a grow bag' also 'How to grow potatoes in the ground'.

<https://www.westcoastseeds.com/blogs/wcs-academy/planting-potatoes>

BC Living "How to Plant Container Potatoes": detailed article on steps to growing in pots or bags including a suggested potting soil mixture.

<https://www.bcliving.ca/home/garden/plant-container-potatoes>

Gardenworks Tip Sheets "Potatoes": how to propagate, plant, harvest, and store potatoes.

<https://www.gardenworks.ca/tip-sheets/potatoes>