



## Growing Irish potatoes in a kitchen garden

Irish potato is not only a good source of carbohydrate and energy. It also contains vitamins and minerals. A medium-size potato with the skin provides vitamin C, Potassium, vitamin B6 and Magnesium, Phosphorus, Iron, and Zinc. Potatoes also contain considerable amount of fibre



Since potatoes predominantly contain carbohydrates, they are easy to digest and facilitate digestion. This property makes them a good diet for patients, babies and those who cannot digest hard food but need energy.

### Seed Selection

It is recommended to use certified seed. This is a seed which:

- Grows fast
- Is disease free
- Gives higher yields
- Gets better prices in the market.
- You will get certified potato seeds from good suppliers.

If you plan to use the seeds from your farm, select and mark healthy ones while they are still growing.



Select seeds which are free from cuts, disease free, has sprouts and with the size of an egg.

- Get clean Potato seeds from KALRO centres in Tigoni, Embu, Kitale, Oljororok, ADC farm in Molo and Kisima Farm in Nanyuki. It is cheaper to buy seeds as a group.
- The seed tubers should be well sprouted with 4-5 sprouts. Good sprouting of seed tuber ensures uniform stand and early emergence.



## Site Selection and Land Preparation

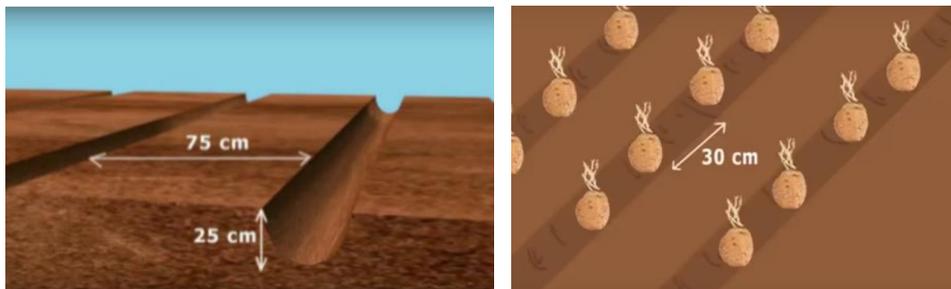
Land set aside for potatoes should not have been under any other potato family crops such as tomatoes, capsicum, eggplant etc. for at least 4 seasons (2 years). This is necessary to avoid soil borne diseases and pests.

Avoid poorly drained or rocky soils. To prepare your land:

- Plough your land
- Dig field thoroughly to remove weeds like couch grass and to break lumps of soil for good air circulation and to allow tubers to grow.
- Mix in well-rotted manure
- Smooth the soil surface.

## Planting

Potatoes should be planted in rows



- Make furrows 75cm apart and 25 cm deep. It will allow tubers to easily expand and also make harvesting easier. They will also be less pest attack on ridged potato.
- Plant the seed tuber 25-30cm apart in the rows.
- Place the seed tuber in the furrows with the sprouts facing up.
- Planting should be done shortly before the rains starts
- Cover properly but not too deep (10cm deep is recommended) to enable plant emerge quickly.



## Management

Weeds take water, nutrients and space from your crop. They also hide pests and diseases. Weed by hand or use a jembe.



When your potato plants are 15-25 cm tall, heap soil around the roots. This gives more space for the tubers to grow big and they are less likely to turn green. Green potatoes do not fetch a good price.

## Harvesting

- Harvest potatoes when the leaves start to turn yellow. This is a sign that the crop is ready for harvest.
- Before harvesting, make sure the skin of tubers has hardened. To harden skin, let plant tops dry naturally or cut the top of plants 2 weeks before harvest. When the potato tuber skin is hard, it is not easy to damage at harvest.
- Do not leave mature potato tubers for more than 2 weeks in the soil after removing the tops. This will avoid attack by soil insects and rotting.
- Harvest in dry weather as this is good time for quicker drying of tubers and healing of skin wounds. Wet soil makes harvesting difficult and may lead to tubers getting diseases.



## Storage

Only store clean and dry potatoes. They must have mature skins free from wounds, rots or any diseases.

Store potatoes in a cold place (5-10C). A good way to store your potatoes is using a charcoal cooler store:



- Build a big charcoal store with your neighbours. Store your potato crop for up to 3-4 months.
- The open walls are made of mesh wire packed with charcoal.
- The charcoal is always kept wet by water from a tank. Water evaporates from the charcoal which takes heat from inside the store. The store is therefore kept very cold. It is also dark – perfect for potatoes.
- Make sure the bags do not touch the walls.