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Potatoes for the Home Garden

Prepared by WILLIAM E. SIEVEKING

Extension Seed Certification Specialist, Oregon State University, Corvallis

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Potato production practices for home gardens vary in some details from commercial potato production practices. Some superior varieties that would not produce adequately in the field can be raised in home gardens. Likewise, fungicides and insecticides that would be either uneconomical or impractical for commercial production can be used in gardens.

VARIETIES

The following varieties all possess exceptional cooking quality and are well suited to home-garden production:

Early Red Varieties

Bliss Triumph
Early Red Rose

Early White Varieties

Irish Cobbler
White Rose
Early Rose
Early Gem

Late Red Varieties

Red Pontiac

Late White Varieties

Netted Gem
(Russet Burbank)
Katahdin

You can get seed stock of these varieties from local feed and seed stores. Be sure to plant *certified seed*; this will help assure good production and freedom from inherent diseases.

CUTTING AND SEED TREATMENT

Cut seed tubers into halves or quarters, depending on their size. Each seed piece should weigh one and a half to two ounces, and each one *must* have at least one eye or it will not grow. After cutting, treat the seed pieces with Captan or a similar material to assure "healing" of the cut surfaces and prevent rotting and disease spread. Every seed piece must be completely covered with the seed-treatment material. These materials can be purchased at local feed stores. Be sure to follow the directions on the package.

FERTILIZATION

Central and eastern Oregon. Use 16-20-0 fertilizer. It contains 16% nitrogen and 20% phosphorus. In certain areas, potash is also needed and in such

cases fertilizer practices for western Oregon should be followed. Work the fertilizer into the soil at a rate of 14 pounds per 1,000 square feet. A highly satisfactory alternative method is to place $\frac{1}{4}$ ounce of this fertilizer about 3 inches to either side and about 1 inch below the seed piece at planting time.

Western Oregon. Use a 10-16-8 fertilizer. It contains 10% nitrogen, 16% phosphorus, and 8% potash. Apply the fertilizer at a rate of 17 pounds per 1,000 square feet, or $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce to either side and about one inch below the seed piece.

PLANTING

Space rows about 3 feet apart with seed pieces about 1 foot apart in the row. Plant the seed pieces 3 inches deep as soon as possible after cutting and treating. Plantings can be made as soon as the ground warms up in the spring until as late as the end of June. The earliness of planting, as well as choice of variety, will influence the earliness of the crop. Plant potatoes intended for winter storage later than those for summer use.

CULTIVATION

As the plants grow, "hill up" or pile soil around their bases and about 6 inches to either side. Sunlight causes newly formed tubers to turn green, and this practice helps to keep them away from the sun. Do not completely cover the plant foliage.

The control of weeds is important. The best, easiest, and most economical method is by mechanical means, such as hoeing. It is only necessary to scratch beneath the surface enough to sever weed roots. Do not hoe too deeply. Cultivate after heavy rains also to keep the soil loose.

IRRIGATION

If irrigation is to be practiced, begin when the plants are about 5 inches high. Once irrigation is started, the ground should be kept damp. If the soil dries following irrigation, an increased percentage of small, knobby tubers of inferior quality will result.



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HARVESTING

Potatoes can be harvested and used at any time. However, immature tubers will not store for long without rotting and shriveling.

If tubers are to be stored for winter use, harvest after the vines have died down as a result of frost or the discontinuance of irrigation. At least two weeks should elapse after the vines die before starting to dig in order to permit the skins to thicken and the tubers to mature. Store tubers in a cool place, but where there is no danger of freezing.

DISEASE CONTROL

Late-blight control is of some importance in western Oregon, and control measures should also be taken in eastern Oregon whenever blight symptoms begin to appear. Efficient control can be obtained with Maneb. This material can be obtained as a wettable powder under the trade names Dithane M-22 and Manzate. Instructions given on the packages should be followed carefully.

INSECT CONTROL

Fleabeetles. Control of fleabeetles is a *must* in western Oregon and in certain localized areas of eastern Oregon. The presence of these beetles is indicated by

small round holes in the leaves, but the damage is caused by the larvae feeding on the tubers.

Control fleabeetles by dusting with malathion or DDT. Begin treatment when two-thirds of the plants have emerged from the soil and continue at 10-day to 2-week intervals throughout the season. Malathion will not control fleabeetles for as long a time as DDT.

Colorado potato beetles. These beetles are sometimes a pest in central and eastern Oregon. Control them with DDT as directed on the packages.

Mites. Very small, spider-like creatures, mites can be detected by their feeding which causes the plants to appear yellowish and dry. Webbing may be observed. Malathion will usually control mites, but in some areas they may be immune to this material. If malathion gives inadequate control, substitute Kelthane. Malathion is preferred because it also controls other insects.

Aphids. Important vectors of serious virus diseases, aphids decrease yield and quality of tubers. Control can be obtained with malathion.

While all chemicals mentioned in this publication are considered safe to humans, caution should always be used in handling and applying them. Be sure to read and follow the instructions printed on the manufacturers' labels.

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