



Growing potatoes in bags is ideal for small gardens or patios.
Image: Graham Corney

Source: <https://www.thompson-morgan.com/how-to-grow-potatoes-in-bags#:~:text=Carefully%20plunge%20a%20single%20chitted,cover%20the%20tuber%20with%20compost.&text=Place%20the%20potato%20bag%20in,for%20your>

Planting **potatoes in bags** is the perfect way to grow spuds in small gardens, and on patios and balconies. Potatoes grown this way are also less susceptible to pests and diseases, offering you a better chance of achieving great results. Here's everything you need to know about growing potatoes using this easy, space-saving method.

When to plant potatoes



For a summer harvest plant potatoes in early spring.
Image: Shutterstock

Plant your **seed potatoes** in March for harvesting throughout the summer and autumn. Or plant in August/September for Christmas new potatoes, also called Second Cropping Potatoes.

Use the table below as a guide to when to plant your potatoes, and do take a look at our **potato selector guide** to help you decide which varieties will best suit your needs.

Cropping Type	Planting time begins	Final planting date	Harvest from planting date
First early potatoes	End of February	Late May	10 weeks
Second early potatoes	March	Late May	13 weeks
Early maincrop potatoes	March	Late May	15 weeks
Maincrop potatoes	March	Mid May	20 weeks
Second cropping potatoes	Early August	End of August	11 weeks

'Chitting' Potatoes



'Chit' your potatoes in an empty egg carton.
Image: D. Pimborough

Seed potatoes, particularly early and second early varieties benefit from 'chitting'. That's the process of allowing them to 'sprout' prior to planting, to produce faster growth and heavier crops. Second cropping potatoes don't require chitting and can be planted straight away.

To chit your seed potatoes, lay them out in a cool, bright, frost free position (10C/ 50F). A reliable, tried-and-tested method is to arrange them in empty egg boxes or seed trays. You'll notice the immature shoots sprout from one end of the potato – called the rose end. Seed potatoes are ready to plant when the chits reach 25mm (1") in length, and should always be planted with the rose end facing up.

Seed potatoes are normally about the size of a chicken's egg, but don't worry if yours are different sizes – it won't affect your harvest. In fact, during the Second World War people often cut larger seed potatoes in half or even smaller divisions to make them go further.

If you decide to cut your seed potatoes, that's fine, but do leave them to dry for three or four days before planting in the usual way. Provided that each piece has an eye or two for the new growth to develop, these tuber divisions will still crop well.

How to plant potatoes in bags



Cover your potatoes with plenty of soil to prevent them from turning green.

In the past, growing potatoes in **bags** has always involved the traditional 'earthing up' process – planting your spuds in minimal compost at the bottom of the bag and adding more as the plant grows.

But while some gardeners continue to swear by the 'old school' method, recent trials here at Thompson and Morgan show it's not necessary as long as you make sure your spuds are protected from the sunlight by the soil and foliage. Remember – green spuds are inedible and you should discard them.

Here's how to plant your potato bags:

- Fill an 8 litre potato bag with quality multipurpose compost to about 2.5cm (1") below the rim.
- Carefully plunge a single chitted potato tuber into the compost with the shoots pointing upwards, to a depth of 12cm (5") from the soil surface. Gently cover the tuber with compost.
- Place the potato bag in a bright, frost free position, water regularly, and wait for your plants to grow.
- Feed potato plants every other week with potato fertiliser and water the bags whenever the compost shows signs of drying out.

When to harvest your potatoes



Once your potatoes are ready, tip the bag into a wheelbarrow for a quick, no-mess harvest.
Image: Deborah Lee Rossiter

Harvest times vary depending on the growing season and how big you want your potatoes to be. The table above provides a rough guide for each crop type, but as a rule of thumb, start to harvest first earlies as 'new potatoes' when the plants begin to flower, approximately 10 weeks from planting.

With main crop varieties, you should allow the leaves and haulms (stems) to wither before cutting them to soil level and discarding. Now wait for two weeks before harvesting your potatoes so that the skins will have time to set properly. You should also cut down and destroy the foliage should you see signs of blight.

Second cropping tubers – or Christmas potatoes, are usually ready to harvest from the end of November, or you can leave them in the soil until Christmas. Cut down the foliage as the leaves wither and yellow, and protect your spuds from frost by either covering your potato growing bags with a thick layer of straw or moving them into your shed or greenhouse.

If you're not sure if your potatoes are ready, you can soon find out by having a gentle dig below the surface to check how big they are – if they're too small just leave them for another week or so, lift them and enjoy!

How do I plant potatoes in bags?

The all important task of planting potatoes. Believe me, this is not difficult in the slightest.

Step 1: Get in the equipment:

Whilst you won't need much equipment to get going, you are going to need to get some basics in.

Compost: To grow potatoes, Multi Purpose compost that you would pick up from any garden centre will be completely fine to grow potatoes. To fill one potato bag, you are probably going to need around 50 litres of compost. This will cover the initial planting phase as well as the hilling up process.

Seed Potatoes: Seed potatoes are what you need to grow potatoes. You will need to decide what you are going to grow in terms of the crop. You can check out our guide [here](#), to help you choose what you would like to grow.

Potato Bags: There are many potato bags out there that you can use but we would recommend these ones from [Amazon](#). They are amazing value and tick all the boxes for what you are going to need to grow your own home grown potatoes.

Step 2: Chit the potatoes:



Chitting potatoes is an important part of getting the seed potatoes ready for planting. Essentially, this is where you put the seed potatoes in a container such as an egg box in a dry, cool, light position. This will help the potatoes sprout until they are ready for planting. You can find out more about chitting in our guide [here](#).

Step 3: Getting the potato bags ready:



Other than getting them out of the packaging, there isn't that much to do. However, you are going to want to make sure

that they are in a sunny position where they are going to get around 8 hours of sunlight a day. We put all of the bags together as it helps with watering and understand how much they need. Having them in different positions will mean that each bag will need a different amount of water and you will find it hard to be consistent. You may also want to roll them down until the potato grows.

Step 4: Planting the potatoes:



The potatoes bags that we use, only need 3 seed potatoes. Any more, and you will be risking overcrowding which will have a detrimental effect on the crop that you are trying to grow. 3 plants are optimum and will generate a good crop by the end of the growing season. You want to plant the seed potatoes with the sprouts facing upwards, the plant will eventually come through when it starts to grow. As you can see from the picture, the potatoes are evenly spaced in the bag so that they have an equal amount of space to grow. You will also need to put them on a bed of around 3 inches of soil

Step 5: Cover them over with soil:



Once the seeds are in the bag, you will need to cover them with soil. When growing potatoes it is very important to ensure that they are not exposed to daylight. They should always be under the soil. You will want to add at least 6cm (couple of inches) of soil on top of the seed potatoes for the sprouts to start growing. The plants will then come through the soil. They will grow pretty quickly from this stage onwards.



Step 6: Hilling up:



This is also a very important stage of potato growth. In order to ensure that you get a good crop of potatoes, hilling up will ensure that there is enough soil in the bag for the potatoes underneath to carry on growing. Once the plant gets to around 6 inches about the ground, you need to carefully add soil to the bag to cover the plant that is growing underneath. Be careful not to disturb the plant too much or create any damage to the plant. You will need to repeat this process all the way up to

the top of the bag. At this stage, you will then be able to leave the plant until harvest!