

## 2023 Seed Swap and Potato Day – Potato Information Sheet

Variety	Season	Characteristics/Uses
Rocket	First Early	One of the earliest earlies. Ideal for salads and exceptionally mild flavour. Produces large crops of waxy tubers with white flesh and skin. Good potato for container or bag growing. Good for polytunnels or greenhouses for even earlier potatoes.
Swift	First Early	The earliest early'! Swift is an exceptionally early maturing variety, some claim they can do this in 7 weeks but 10 weeks is probably more realistic. Producing good yields of attractive medium-sized white tubers with waxy texture. Often overlooked is their good pest and disease resistance. Their final plus point is that they keep well in the ground, turning more floury as time goes on.
Epicure	First Early	Also known as 'Ayrshires', or 'Ayrshire Earlies' the traditional early potato in that region, produce high yields of floury, white fleshed tubers that are round in shape. By far one of the best tasting first earlies. An old heritage variety, have the ability to recover quickly from a nip of frost, which is what makes them so popular in colder or higher areas. Boil, mash or enjoy them with a salad.
Red Duke of York	First Early	A "new potato" but also an all-rounder. Heritage variety with deep red skin and creamy white flesh. A real favourite among garden growers, produced from a fast growing plant. Used for colour in cooking when the skins are left on. It has a great flavour when mashed with ample amounts of butter. RHS Award of Garden Merit.
Organic Maris Bard	First Early	A cream skinned and white fleshed oval tuber variety. Produces a medium waxy potato which holds its shape making it good for boiling and chipping, and a delight in salads. A fast growing and high yielding crop can be expected with a plant of berries and violet flowers. RHS Award of Garden Merit.
Organic Casablanca	First Early	Very versatile of the potato, good for all uses from boiling and chipping to mash and roasting. White skin and flesh, smooth texture. RHS Award of Garden Merit.
Pentland Javelin	First Early	Bred by a young Jack Dunnett back in 1968. For years they have been considered to be one of the finest first earlies that you can grow. Produces heavy crops of short oval white-skinned tubers with pure white tasty flesh. A great potato to put into the pan and boil and use for salads, also has good all-round disease resistance to common scab and blackleg. It can be left in the ground longer than most first earlies to mature further giving a more floury potato.
Salad Blue	Second Early	Blue through and through – and makes great chips, crisps, mash and a colourful salad. Blue skins and blue flesh make this a very popular novelty potato. But there is more to the 1900s crop, a gentle flavour and good texture make this floury potato popular with chefs.
British Queen	Second Early	Heritage variety, produces moderate to high yield of white-skinned, oval tubers with a white, floury flesh. Popular for its versatility in the kitchen – needs gentle simmering to produce excellent mash, and a great roaster. Bred by the Scottish breeder Archibald Finlay in Lincolnshire and first marketed in 1894. Still popular in Ireland where it is sold as 'Queens'. RHS Award of Garden Merit.
Charlotte	Second Early/Salad	Salad potato with waxy firm flesh. Roasting or sauté produces excellent results. Long regular tubers, attractive yellow skin and cream/yellow flesh. Reliable, popular and high-yielding variety. Good for containers and late planting for Christmas new potatoes. Resistance to blight, common scab and slugs leading to good appearance. RHS Award of Garden Merit.
Catriona	Second Early	Heritage variety which produces a moderate yield of long oval, parti-coloured blue tubers with a light yellow flesh. It has excellent flavour and cooking qualities. Bred by Scottish breeder Archibald Findlay in Lincolnshire and first marketed in 1920.
Nicola	Second Early/Salad	Small, firm, waxy salad potato full of flavour. Great for boiling and wedges as well. One of the very best potatoes for the amateur

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		gardener with well-shaped oval potatoes with yellow skin and cream/yellow coloured flesh. Top variety to grow for Christmas. Reasonably good disease resistance overall.
Kestrel	Second Early	Scottish bred potato with high yield, delicious flavour, suitable for all main cooking uses; excellent chips and roast potatoes. Good for the show bench – attractive long oval tubers with white skin and splashes of blue/purple around the eyes and cream flesh. Also has excellent and disease and slug resistance.
Acoustic	Second Early/Salad	Has a high yield on both light sandy soil and on heavier clay soil. Stress-resistant and resistant to extreme weather conditions. Produces tasty round oval uniform tubers with a good skin and is great all-rounder in the kitchen. It can be harvested as a second-early when the texture is waxy and perfect for salads and boiling. However, it can be harvested later in the season when the texture changes to become more floury, perfect for chips, baking, mashing and wedges.
Ratte	Second Early/Salad	A French heritage salad potato variety renowned for its numerous finger-like potatoes and delightful nutty, buttery flavour, most delicious when boiled or steamed, hot or cold. White skin and yellow flesh. It's also known as Asparagus. RHS Award of Garden Merit.
Edzell Blue	Second Early/Salad	A blue skinned and white fleshed potato which produces great flavoured and vibrant dishes in the kitchen when baked, mashed and fried due to its floury nature.
Desiree	Early Maincrop	Red-skinned large oval potato with yellow flesh and distinctive flavour. A favourite with allotment-holders because of its resistance to drought and high yield. Versatile, fairly waxy variety which is firm and holds its shape, useful for all methods of cooking, from roasting to mashing and salads. The chef's favourite maincrop red skin variety. Reasonable resistance to viruses and blight too. RHS Award of Garden Merit.
Highland Burgundy Red	Maincrop	Floury red heritage potato with slightly sweet flavour, makes excellent novelty chips, crisps, mash or roast. Keeps red flesh colour especially if fried or steamed and cooked with skin on. Long oval shaped tubers with a bright burgundy skin, red flesh with a definite ring of white. Produces moderate yields with high numbers of tubers per plant. Around since the 1930s and linked with the Duke of Burgundy through name.
Kerrs Pink	Maincrop	A favourite in Ireland with an unusual pale pink skin with darker pink eyes. It is a robust plant, producing a large crop of bold tasty potatoes.
Organic Java	Maincrop	A strong robust variety with excellent fungal, bacterial, virus and pest resistances. Java is an ideal variety for gardens and allotments as it is a consistently high-yielding variety with attractive long red skinned tubers with white flesh. A cross between Sarpo Mira and Valor.
Scapa	Maincrop	Scapa is a cross between Mayan Twilight and Mayan Gold. It produces long oval tubers with yellow skin and deep yellow flesh. It's perfect for boiling and mashing.
Organic Blue Anneliese	Maincrop	Speciality potato which produces long oval tubers with deep blue skin and blue flesh. Fairly recent introduction from Germany. Mild slightly creamy flavour and a nutty aroma. Tubers do not get too large and are ideal for salad, roast and baked potatoes.
Organic Heiderot	Maincrop	German speciality variety, also known as Heidi Red, producing long oval tubers with bright red skin and flesh. Ideal general purpose potato with a slightly buttery, delicious potato taste. It is ideal for salads and boiled potatoes. Some blight resistance.

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Pink Fir Apple	Late Maincrop	A salad potato with waxy flesh and a wonderful nutty, earthy flavour - great steamed, boiled, fried or roasted. Tubers are knobbly so cook with skin on. A must have heritage variety for gardeners. These fingerling potatoes are long, narrow, with pink skin and firm yellow flesh. Produces numerous tubers that store well. RHS Award of Garden Merit.
Golden Wonder	Late Maincrop	A famous old potato with excellent traditional potato flavour and very high floury texture making them ideal for baking, frying, chips and roasts. Long oval tubers with relatively rough skin, cream to yellow in colour. Foliage vigorous, plant as early as possible for a large crop. Potatoes store well with flavour improving with time.

## Advice on Choosing Varieties - First Early, Second Early or Maincrop?

**First Early Potatoes:** First earlies grow to maturity the fastest. The time from planting out until maturity is about 100 days, so that's when you can start lifting them. This can be shortened to about 60 days if you can keep them under cover for the first 6-8 weeks. Chitting is a good idea, particularly for earlies, as it will bring the crop forward. (Chitting means allowing them to start sprouting shoots; stand them in egg boxes or similar in a light, frost-free place, the end with most 'eyes' should be pointing upwards).

First earlies will store in the ground for about 4 weeks after reaching maturity, and should be cooked as soon as possible after lifting, to get that fresh taste. Many of the "new potatoes" are first earlies, this is an old term meaning those potatoes that the skin rubs off easily.

**Second Early Potatoes:** These are slightly later to mature than the first earlies but are still considered early potatoes. They are ready to start lifting about 2 weeks after the first early potatoes. In the second early category you'll often find those potatoes referred to as "salad potatoes", because they're slightly more firm and waxy in the flesh and therefore ideal for using in salads.

Like the first earlies, second earlies are best eaten straight out of the ground and will keep stored in the ground for up to a month after reaching maturity. However, second earlies will also store well, provided the skins have set – some people grow them to store over winter as part of their strategy against blight.

**Maincrop Potatoes:** Maincrop potatoes are usually stored and used over winter. You can start lifting them around 4 weeks later than the first earlies (2 weeks later than second earlies), at which time they will pass as new potatoes. But their real strength lies in letting them grow to maturity, lifting them towards the end of the growing season for storage to see you through the winter period. Be sure to allow good skin set to maximise storage quality of the potatoes – to do this cut off the shaws (tops) and leave in the ground for 10 days before lifting. They should be stored in a dark, frost free area.

Although some of them are firmer in the flesh than others – the general rule is that maincrop potatoes tend to be more floury. This makes them excellent for producing chips, roast potatoes and mash, while you need to be careful not to overcook when boiling them.

Chitting can also be a good idea for second earlies and maincrop potatoes, particularly if blight sweeps in and you have to cut back the shaws (tops), as the crop will be bigger than it would otherwise have been.

**Planting Potatoes:** The RHS website gives some good advice: <https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/grow-your-own/vegetables/potatoes>

“The traditional planting method is to dig a narrow trench 12cm (5in) deep. The seed tubers are spaced 30cm (12in) apart for earlies and 37cm (15in) for maincrop varieties in rows 24in (60cm) apart for earlies and 75cm (30in) apart for maincrop. Apply a general purpose fertiliser at this stage. Small crops of potatoes can also be grown in large, deep containers, and this is a good way of getting an early batch of new potatoes. Fill the bottom 15cm (6in) of the container with potting compost and plant the seed potato just below this. As the new stems start growing, keep adding compost until the container is full”. Some people who practice the no dig method, use mulch to cover the tubers instead of soil and harvest by pulling rather than digging them, see a really great video of how to go about it: <https://www.charlesdowding.co.uk/no-dig-potatoes-from-seed-to-harvest/>

**Yield:** A rough rule of thumb is that you should get 5-10 potatoes per plant but this will vary on the type of potato, its size and growing conditions.

### **Blight Problems?**

If you have a history of blight in your garden, you can try some strategies to cope with this. Many modern varieties, such as Sarpo Mira, have been specially bred for blight-resistance, so chose these to try. You could also try growing a good proportion of second earlies, as the potatoes will have grown larger than maincrop varieties before the disease hampers growth; they also store well. However, heritage varieties often have exceptional taste and cooking characteristics, so it might be worth trying some of these and making sure you cut off the shaws at the first sign of blight to save the crop.

**Blight alert:** [blightwatch.co.uk](http://blightwatch.co.uk) Why not sign up to get an alert when blight is affecting your area?