

Vegetable Plant Guide

Get the best from your plants

Quick Tips

- Open packaging immediately on receipt and stand upright where appropriate.
- Remove bagging if present on the pots. If plants seem dry, place roots/pots in a tray of water for half an hour.
- When growing in containers, don't fill to the brim with compost. Leave up to 2.5cm (1in) of pot on show to allow for watering – halve this for small pots and cell trays.
- If growing on the windowsill, turn plants regularly to prevent them stretching towards the light.
- Pots should always have drainage holes, but place on saucers/trays to prevent surface staining. It also helps retain extra water during summer heat.
- Always water prior to planting or potting on.
- Prepare soils ahead of planting. For the best establishment, work incredicompost® and incredicrop® fertiliser into the growing area. These will also give you the best results with container crops too. Alternatively opt for regular liquid feeds through the season, starting at 6 weeks after planting.
- Avoid planting when soils are too wet or frozen.
- Acclimatise all indoor grown plants to outside conditions after the last frost, by placing outside by day and back undercover each evening for 7-10 days.



Potato planting guide:

20 tubers will plant as follows	First Earlies	Second Earlies	Early Maincrop	Late Maincrop
Area Coverage	20ft (6m)	25ft (7.4m)	30ft (9m)	30ft (9m)
Planting Distance in Row	12in (30cm) apart	15in (37cm) apart	18in (45cm) apart	18in (45cm) apart
Distance Between Rows	2ft (60cm)	2.5ft (75cm)	2.5ft (75cm)	2.5ft (75cm)
Plant	From end February	March	March	March
Recommended final planting date	Late May	Late May	Late May	Mid May
Harvest (weeks from planting)	10 weeks	13 weeks	15 weeks	20 weeks

8 litre potato bags: Plant 1 chitted tuber for each 8 litre bag and this will give a high number of small potatoes. Use approximately 8 litres (multi-purpose compost). Your yield will vary, depending on how well they are looked after and the prevailing temperature and light levels. You should get a minimum of 1kg per bag.

- Can be used outdoors or in the greenhouse for general-purpose growing.
- Ideally for First Earlies and salads but can be used to grow any type of crop (e.g. Second Earlies, Main Crop etc).
- For general purpose growing, the recommended planting time is mid-February up until late-May. If the bag is to be stood in a greenhouse, planting could be carried out in mid-January but it must be kept frost-free.
- From a mid-February planting, harvest can be expected from 10 weeks. From a mid-January protected planting, harvest can be expected from 13 weeks (the cooler temperatures and poorer quality daylight means that they take longer to grow).
- Can also be used for mid June to late July plantings of second cropping /Christmas potatoes for lifting during autumn or kept in the planter and tipped out for Christmas, planting 1 tuber per 8 litre bag.

Artichoke: Plant as soon as possible upon receipt. If planting is delayed, remove from their packaging and place in trays or shallow boxes with some moist peat and keep in a cool but frost free place. As the plants grow over 1.5m (5ft) they may need supporting on very windy or exposed sites. Plant tubers 45cm (18in) apart in a trench 12-15cm (5-6in) deep using a trowel. If more than one row is planted allow 90cm (3ft) between them. When plants are about 30cm (12in) high draw up soil around the base of the stems to help establish the plants and to provide extra soil for the forming tubers. Water plants thoroughly if the weather is dry for long periods. Remove any flower buds that form. When the leaves turn brown in autumn cut down the stems to about 30cm (12in) from the ground. Roots can be lifted as required. Fully winter hardy. If your ground is prone to waterlogging then it may be best to lift and store your tubers in boxes of barely moist peat or sand in the garage or shed. When lifting ensure all the smallest tubers are removed or they will grow as weeds the following year.

Asparagus: Trim off with a sharp knife any damaged or broken roots. Ensure the roots do not dry out. Soak in a bucket of water or wrap in damp cloth until ready for planting. Asparagus does best in an open, sunny situation and sheltered from strong winds. Remove all perennial weeds. Adding liberal quantities of well rotted manure or compost is advisable. Dig a trench 20cm (8in) deep and at least 30cm (12in) wide to allow each individual crown to have its roots fully spread out. Now create a mound about 7cm (3in) high along the bottom of the trench for the crowns to rest on. Set the crowns 37-45cm (15-18in) apart. Cover carefully with 5-7cm (2-3in) soil firming in as you go. If planting more than one row allow at least 75cm (2½ft) between rows. It is essential that the crowns do not dry out during the first summer, and you should not cut any spears during the first year of planting, but allow them to develop foliage. Never cut for more than 8-9 weeks at a time. As the plants grow gradually fill in the trench. Hand weed the beds as necessary. Do not hoe as you may damage the tender roots. Most varieties (except Connovers Colossal) produce predominantly male plants but some female plants (these produce berries) which must be removed before they ripen to red. Female plants still produce a good crop of spears. Cut down the fern in late autumn once it has yellowed and liberally cover the plants with well rotted compost. In March each year apply a balanced general fertiliser. In the second year a frugal cut of spears can be taken during April-June but it is from the third year onwards that full production will commence. Spears can be cut when up to 15cm (6in) long. If you want green spears, or purple from our purple speared varieties, then allow them to appear above the ground. If you want white (blanched) spears then you will have to earth up as you would potatoes. Stop cutting by mid June, allowing any further spears to develop into foliage. Later cuttings will weaken the plant and reduce its potential crop the following year.

Beetroot: Provide a sunny, sheltered position. Apply a general fertiliser before planting, raking into the soil surface at a rate of about 120g per sq.m. Keep well-watered, especially during dry periods. Harvest when roots reach about 4cm (1½in) in diameter or more. The smaller the root, the better the quality.

Brassica (including clubroot resistant Cabbage, Savoy, Cauliflower, Calabrese, Brussels Sprout, Broccoli): Avoid planting in soil which has had brassicas grown on last season. Choose a sunny, sheltered position. Apply a general fertiliser before planting, about 120g per sq.m, raking into the soil surface. Water in well and keep watered until established, especially important for the first month after planting. Cover with fleece or netting to deter aphids, caterpillar, rootfly and birds.

Broad Bean: Prepare the soil in early spring by adding plenty of well rotted garden compost to the soil to improve its structure and fertility. Avoid using products that are high in nitrogen such as farmyard manure, as this may promote lush foliage instead of beans. Plant at a distance of 22cm (9in) apart in staggered rows for the highest yields. Water the plants in well after planting. Support with stout canes and string as necessary. Pinch out tips of plants when in flower to help pods swell.

Celery: Choose a sunny, sheltered position. Apply a general fertiliser before planting, raking into the soil surface at a rate of about 120g per sq.m. Plant outside into well-prepared soil, 38cm (15in) apart. Plant in block formation to assist with self-blanching. It is essential to keep well watered for succulently flavoured, string free stems.

Climbing Bean: Choose a sheltered position. Fix up canes, wigwams or netting ready to support the climbing plants. Apply a general fertiliser before planting, raking into the soil surface at a rate of about 120g per sq.m. Plant outside into well-prepared soil, and keep watered during dry weather.

Courgette: Plenty of water is essential, particularly once the plants are in flower and then when the fruits have started to swell. In hot, dry weather, plants may need as much as ten litres (two gallons) of water regularly. Mulching will help to retain moisture. When planting choose a good quality compost which has been balanced to contain the optimum amount of nutrients to get your plants off to a flying start. For added support, place your containers against a wall with trellis. Once the plants have started to crop, the rate at which they form fruits is phenomenal. If you want to ensure maximum cropping you need to harvest courgettes frequently from about 5 weeks after planting. Harvest three times a week in the height of the season. As a rule, the correct size at which the fruits should be harvested is about 10cm (4in) long. If you cannot easily cut into the skin with your thumbnail, they are past their best.

Cucumber: Pot on as soon as they have produced 2-3 leaves, pot into 13cm (5in) pots and then, when well-grown, into growbags (2-3 per growbag) or 23-25cm (9-10in) pots. Train the main shoot up to top of the wire and then pinch out the growing point and allow two shoots to trail downward. Keep your plants moist but not wet, apply shading as required and provide a moist, warm atmosphere. Regular picking will encourage continued fruiting. Under stress conditions, male flowers may be produced and these should be removed for best fruiting performance.

Dwarf Bean: Prepare the soil in early spring by adding plenty of well rotted garden compost to the soil to improve its structure and fertility. Avoid using products that are high in nitrogen such as farmyard manure, as this may promote lush foliage instead of beans. Plant at a distance of 22cm (9in) apart in staggered rows for the highest yields. Water the plants in well after planting.

Garlic (Spring): Spring planting garlic is sent out from March until mid April. Plant as soon as your soil is workable, or pot up individual cloves as per autumn planting instructions. Planting and cultivation details similar to autumn planting garlic except harvesting period will be during August or when leaves have yellowed and withered.

Garlic (Autumn, including 'Elephant' garlic): Garlic cultivars are further classified as Hardneck (Rocambole and Porcelain types) or Softneck (Creole and Asiatic types). All Hardnecks produce a seed stalk called a 'scape', which can be removed or left intact, either way does not affect the swelling bulb so gardeners can decide for themselves. If removed these 'scapes' are delicious in stir-fries and cooked dishes, or to add a garlic taste in salads. Garlic is remarkably easy to grow and performs well in most soils although some of the higher mineral soils can 'dirty' the skins. Ensure your soil does not water-log during the winter months. Carefully break up the bulbs into their constituent 'cloves', ensuring you do not damage them as any bruises may lead to rotting before establishment. Draw out a narrow drill or use a trowel to plant each clove, root end downwards (the small attached base plate where you broke up the bulb), so the tips show just above the soil, allowing 37cm (15in) between rows. If the soil is very wet or unworkable, plant individual cloves in 5cm (2in) pots of multi purpose compost indoors and then plant out as soil and weather conditions allow. Although garlic grows well in most soil types they do respond to an application of general fertiliser, (use our specially formulated onion fertiliser), 60g per sq.m (2oz per sq. yd) once the leaves are growing well during March. Do not wait until all the leaves have yellowed before you lift, as skin blemishes soon materialise, but break the root's contact with the soil with a garden fork, similarly as you may do with ripening bulb onions, and leave for a couple of days if the weather is hot and dry and then gather and hang in strings or used tights to completely dry in an airy shed or greenhouse. If kept dry the harvested bulbs will store for months.

Herbs: Feed and water regularly. Cut herbs regularly to encourage plenty of new growth. Divide overcrowded clumps of sage, chives, mint and oregano in spring and apply a mulch of well-rotted manure or compost to the base of the plants.

Kale: Apply a general fertiliser before planting, raking into the soil surface at a rate of about 120g per sq.m. Apply lime to acidic soils to reduce the acidity and lessen the risk of clubroot. When transplanting, plant slightly deeper in the ground than in the tray provided. Cover with a protective netting or fleece to prevent attack from birds and insects. Water the plants thoroughly after planting.

Leek: Provide a sheltered position. Apply a general fertiliser before planting, raking into the soil surface at a rate of about 120g per sq.m. Plant outside into well-prepared soil, 23cm (9in) apart. Keep watered during dry weather. Earth up stems during growing season to increase the length of blanched stem.

Lettuce: Choose a sheltered position. Apply a general fertiliser before planting, raking into the soil surface at a rate of about 120g per sq.m. Keep well-watered, especially during dry periods. Harvest as and when required.

Melon Pear (*Solanum muricatum*): For best results grow in a greenhouse, windowsill or sunny sheltered spot outside. Apply tomato feed every 2 or 3 weeks once fruits have set. Harvest the striped fruits once the green parts take on a yellow hue.

Onion (Autumn): Autumn planting onion sets are sent out from early September, depending on harvesting, drying, cleaning and grading programmes prior to pre-packing. You may notice that your sets have started to grow a little whilst in transit, this will not affect their performance. Plant your sets at any time between early September and the end of October as long as the weather and soil conditions are suitable. Planting them as quickly as possible in warm soil allows for faster establishment and growth before the onset of winter. If you have to delay planting then spread out the sets in full light in a cool, well ventilated place and check them regularly to ensure they are keeping in good condition. Choose a sunny but sheltered position and avoid ground which has recently grown onions or shallots. Soil which was manured for a previous crop is ideal. Plant in rows 30cm (12in) apart. Plant the sets carefully in shallow drills or gently push them into the soil if it is in good condition. On heavier soils, plant with a trowel to avoid any damage to the immature roots. Tips of the shoots should just be showing above the soil. Trim with scissors if tips are too long as birds particularly enjoy tugging them out. Check regularly and carefully replant any that are pulled out. Water in as necessary to aid establishment but as shorter days beckon then it is unlikely any further watering is necessary. In late February or when the soil is manageable give a high nitrogen feed or use our specially formulated onion fertiliser, about 90g per sq m (3oz per sq yd) to initiate spring growth. When the leaves start to turn yellow and die back from the end of June gently tease your fork under the bulbs to break the roots. Allow to dry on the soil for a day or in your greenhouse or shed if the weather is wet. Store only dry and sound bulbs in used tights or nets in a cool, airy place.

Onion (Spring): Spring planting onion sets are sent out from January until April. Heat treated onion sets, specially prepared to minimise bolting (running to seed), are sent out mid March to mid April for prompt planting. Plant as soon as your soil is workable during March and April. Planting distances and cultivation details similar to autumn planting sets except harvesting period will be from mid August once the leaves turn yellow and start to bend over.

Pea (Mangetout, Sugar snaps & Shelling peas): Support plants with pea and bean netting, chicken wire fencing or stout twiggly branches, as plants grow on average 70cm-105cm tall. Water regularly when in flower to improve the crop. Pick mangetout pods regularly when small and flat, just before peas inside start to swell. Pick sugar snaps and shelling peas regularly when pods have filled with plump peas to encourage further flowering and pods.

Pepper (Inc Chilli Pepper): Once your plants start to bear fruit, start feeding once or twice a week with a good all-purpose liquid fertiliser, diluted half-strength. Once they are in bigger pots you can fertilise every day with diluted feed and make sure to use some gravel or pebbles in the bottom of the final pot for drainage. Sweet peppers require pollination to form fruit. If insects are absent, you can tap the plants gently (similarly with tomatoes) to move the pollen. Pollen is produced on the stamens, and usually ripens between noon and 3pm every day. Take a moistened watercolour paintbrush, and pick up some pollen on your brush and transfer it to the other flower centres. You can get close to 100% fruit set with hand pollination. Once germinated, seedlings should have as much light as possible to produce strong stocky plants. Water thoroughly. To keep your plant on the small side, nip out the central stem once it reaches 20cm high. This will force your plant to bush out. Pick the first fruits when they are normally green, swollen and glossy. Harvest as required; a mature pepper will normally turn red, but there are yellow, orange, brown and purple colours. The redder (and smaller) a chilli pepper is, the hotter it will be. Always harvest the fruit with a sharp knife or pruners to avoid damage.

Pumpkin, Winter Squash and Butternuts: Plenty of water is essential, particularly once the plants are in flower and then when the fruits have started to swell. In hot, dry weather, plants may need as much as ten litres (two gallons) of water regularly. Mulching will help to retain moisture. Feed regularly with an all purpose liquid fertiliser once plants have formed.

Runner Bean: Choose a sheltered position. Fix up canes, wigwams or netting ready to support the climbing plants. Apply a general fertiliser before planting, raking into the soil surface at a rate of about 120g per sq.m. Plant outside into well-prepared soil, and keep watered during dry weather.

Shallots: On receipt spread out in full light in a cool, well ventilated place and check them regularly to ensure they are in good condition. Plant as soon as your soil is workable. Plant the bulbs with a trowel so that they are buried to half their depth 15cm (6in) apart and allow 30cm (12in) between rows. Lift once the foliage turns yellow and withers and if the weather is dry and sunny leave the bulbs on the soil surface for a day to set their skins. If wet then allow to dry in a shed or garage. Ensure the shallots are thoroughly dry before storing in used tights, nets or trays in a cool, well ventilated place where they will keep for many months. If soil conditions are not suitable, then pot up in 5-7cm (2-3in) pots of compost to plant out later.

Sweet Potato: These are despatched May for prompt planting. On arrival, unpack from box but leave the plugs laying horizontally on their sides in a light place. After a few days the green shoots will turn upwards growing towards the light. Once the whole of the shoot is pointing upwards, they are ready for planting. In recent trials, we have found if the root ball is planted horizontally with the green shoot pointing upwards, the sweet potatoes will establish quicker and produce a bigger harvest. After planting, protect against frost and biting winds until established. We suggest planting through black plastic or mypex type cover (as you would melons, sweetcorn, ridge cucumbers and butternut squash outdoors) to provide that little extra warmth which is a bonus if our summers remain unpredictable. If planting directly into the soil then ridge up (earth up) as you would potatoes as growth develops. We would suggest growing in a polytunnel or greenhouse in the more cooler, districts of the country. An earlier production can be expected from a protected growing regime. Covering with fleece, muslin net or cloches during cold spells will aid faster establishment. Foliage does not seem to be affected by pests and diseases, perhaps slight slug damage, and rarely pest damage may be visible on the roots when lifted. Regular watering with a high potash feed, and a boron supplement if your soil is deficient, is essential to produce optimum yields of well-swollen roots. Growth slows considerably as cooler nights approach. Lift and store unblemished roots in a warm place (10 - 15°C), as you would pumpkins and winter squashes, as the roots must not become too cold and certainly not frosted as this affects the flesh texture and its eating qualities.

Sweetcorn: Plant out ideally through black plastic or Mypex type cover in blocks of short rows, rather than one long row, to ensure adequate pollination. They prefer a warm, sunny, sheltered spot. Once the silks or tassels start to form on the cobs, regular watering is beneficial. To check that the cobs are ready, squeeze a grain, when the liquid is thin and creamy, not watery, the cob is ready. Water well, especially during warmer summer weather. Shake the plants when they are covered in pollen and 'fluffy', in order to help them pollinate. Harvest when the tassels turn dark brown.

Swiss Chard: Requires a sunny, sheltered position. Apply a general fertiliser before planting, raking into the soil surface at a rate of about 120g per sq.m. Keep well-watered, especially during dry periods. Harvest as and when required.

Tomato upright (cordon), eg Sungold/Sweet Apertif. For optimum sweetness grow outdoors. For greenhouse growing, plant 3 plants per grow bag. Water regularly to keep soil moist at all times, grow bags and containers soon dry out in warm weather and must be watched. Irregular watering can lead to problems such as Blossom End Rot. Feed regularly with a high potash feed once the first truss has set. Remove any shoots within the leaf axils (side shooting) and 'stop' the plant (remove its growing point) after 6 trusses of fruit have set on outdoor crops. Greenhouse crops can be allowed to form and ripen further trusses.

Tomato hanging basket/bush varieties: Choosing the right sized basket is important to ensure it retains enough moisture. A 35cm-40cm (14-16in) diameter basket is ideal. Smaller baskets will dry out quickly. Line the basket with a suitable material which needs to be porous but strong enough to hold the compost in place (e.g., moss, coir or a basket liner). Add a good multipurpose compost and mix in a slow-release fertiliser to reduce the need to feed the plants so often throughout the season. Most plants will still benefit from additional liquid feed once fruiting starts. Watering and regular feeding with a high-potash fertiliser will ensure a plentiful, healthy crop. Plants will not require any side-shooting. When the fruits have ripened, pick them by bending back the fruit at the notch on the stem. They can be eaten straight from the plant, or can be stored for up to a week in the kitchen. Continue to water and feed the plant to help the remaining fruits mature.

Thymus: Thyme is a hardy, drought-loving plant and will not need protection from cold winds, hard winters and hot summers once established. It is important to trim thyme after flowering to keep it compact and productive. Thyme is best in containers (especially in cold areas). The soil should be low in nutrients and free draining. Use a multipurpose or soil based compost when grown in pots.

Visit the gardening information section on our website for a wealth of content to help you get the very best from your new garden additions.