

Use specially cold-stored tubers, not ordinary supermarket spuds which may not sprout satisfactorily, and may carry viruses and diseases.

For fresh new potatoes from October until Christmas or New Year, plant in August or early September, in tubs at least 18" diameter, 3 per tub.

Tubs need drainage holes and a layer of crocks (eg lumps of polystyrene packing) covered with 4" of compost, preferably John Innes no.2 or 3. Place your potatoes on the compost and cover with a further 6" layer. Keep constantly moist.

Add more compost as the plants grow, until the tub is full.

Christmas potatoes may also be grown in the ground, though it will be more difficult to protect them from frost. Plant 15" apart in rows 20" apart, starting to earth up the rows (to stop the tubers becoming green in the light, and to provide frost protection) when the plants are about 9" high. Keep moist.

Watch out for slugs, and if you think blight may be a problem (it's worst in warm, damp weather) try spraying with Bordeaux mixture. Feed with a general purpose liquid fertiliser. If frost is forecast, cover plants with several layers of horticultural fleece, or move containers into a greenhouse or conservatory, to prolong the growing time and produce a larger crop



Your crop is ready when the plant is no longer increasing in size. Harvest tubers as you need them, keeping tubs in a frost-free garage or shed, and protecting potatoes in the ground with a layer of straw - though in wet soil slugs may be a problem.

Enjoy that home-grown new potato taste!