Growing potatoes from sprouting potatoes

Try a small container crop with a healthy sprouting potato, while understanding the disease risks.

What you need

• One firm, healthy sprouting potato

• A clean food-safe container of about 30 litres with drainage holes

• Peat-free compost, water and gardening gloves

Step by step

1. For the most reliable crop, use certified seed potatoes. A shop potato is an experiment: it may carry disease or have been treated to prevent sprouting. Never use a rotting potato.

2. Choose a sunny outdoor spot after hard frosts have passed, usually March to April in much of the UK. Protect shoots from frost.

3. Add about 10cm of compost to the container and place one potato with sprouts facing up. Cover with another 10cm of compost.

4. Water when the compost starts to dry. As shoots reach about 15cm, add compost around them, leaving the tips visible.

5. Keep tubers covered and do not allow the compost to dry out completely. Harvest gently once plants flower for earlies, or foliage dies back for maincrop types.

Make this project work for you

How long it takes

Depending on the variety and conditions, allow about 10 to 20 weeks from planting to harvest.

What you can realistically expect

A container may give a small harvest, but results vary. Shop potatoes are not disease-certified. Keep this trial separate from an established potato patch.

Safety and hygiene

Never eat green potatoes, sprouts or potato leaves. Cut away small green areas generously; discard heavily green or bitter potatoes. Do not compost diseased plants in a home heap.

A different way to do it

Place the container where it can stay for the season: wet compost is heavy. Ask for help filling it and harvest a little at a time at a comfortable height.

Gardening is for everyone

You don’t need a big garden, expensive equipment or years of experience. Whether you can spend hours gardening or just a few minutes a week, there’s something you can grow. Whether you do everything yourself or have someone help you, you’re a gardener. You’re welcome here.

General UK guidance. Results vary with light, temperature, variety and care. Start small and ask for help whenever it suits you.

Questions? Growsmartuk@gmail.com