**Growing potatoes**

You can buy potatoes to grow from garden centres or you could use old potatoes that have started to sprout.

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### **How to chit**

* Chitting simply means encouraging the seed potatoes to sprout before planting.
* Start chitting from late January early February, about six weeks before you intend to plant out the potatoes.
* Put the potatoes in trays or old egg boxes, with plenty of natural light.
* The potatoes are ready to be planted out when the shoots are 1.5-2.5cm (0.5-1in) long

### **How to plant**

* A hessian bag for life makes an excellent potato planter
* Plant your chitted potatoes when the soil has started to warm up, usually from mid-March or early April.
* Place a layer of newspaper or part of a feed sack into the bag to cover the drainage holes. This will hold in moisture in the beginning and invite the earthworms that are a vital part of the composting process that will be going on inside the planter to feed your potatoes.
* Add your compost or soil to around 30 cm from the top.
* Place 4 to 6 potatoes on top of the compost.
* Cover the potatoes with more compost leaving about a 15 cm space at the top of the potato planter.
* As soon as the shoots appear, put more compost over the plant l so that the shoots are just buried.
* You need to do this at regular intervals and by the end of the season each plant will have a small mound around it about 15cm (6in) high.

### **Harvesting**

* Your home-grown potatoes should be ready for lifting from June until September. Earlies can be lifted and eaten as soon as they're ready. This will be when above-ground growth is still green, and usually as soon as the flowers open.

**Remember**

Potatoes like plenty of water and sun