



**** [Fred Astaire... You Say Tomatoes](#) ****

Welcome to vegetableseeds.net.au

September 2014 Newsletter

Welcome to vegetableseeds.net.au newsletter. This month we look at how our Garden Centre offers tomato plants and potatoes.

Tomato, tomato



My colleague at Cressy research station sourced 40 true to type tomato varieties from the Biloela horticultural research station in Queensland - which he knew very well a few years ago - where these rare seeds for research were stored in a cool room.

Sadly that research facility has since closed.

We grew all the tomato varieties out and assessed them all. We saved seeds and now offer them in our catalogue.

St Georges School, our business partner, have been growing the cool climate ones for sale at Inspirations for the last two years. They have proved very popular and we want to keep these fantastic flavoured productive varieties in circulation.

Ones I would recommend for cool climates which are very early and productive are Beaverlodge, Black Plum, Stakeless, Kooteni, Sandpoint, Santa, Cal Mart, Cal Ace, Sweetie, Fireball, Italian Gold, San Marzana Roma, Cherokee Red and Cherokee Purple.



For warmer regions I would really recommend, Nematex, Tropigro, Cambells 17, Castle Mac 9, Es58 Heinz, High Crimson, Kokomo, Double Rich.

Many of the seeds are in limited supply. We also have the very early fruiting Siletz, Oregon Spring, Legend and Golden Nugget seeds supplied to us for the past six years by Steve Solomon.

St Georges School also grows these for sale at Inspirations. We will have the cool climate early varieties at our shop in limited amounts as strong fully hardened off plants from October when our customers in warmer areas know they can plant theirs out until late November when the very last customers who live in colder inland areas plant theirs.

Check our web site [Catalogue](#), [About Us](#) and the [Newsletter October 2013](#) for more information.

Potato, potato

A garden centre is a library of plants. We handle many potato cultivars at the same time every year and become very familiar with our spuds.

Our potato farmer knows potatoes inside out and provides Inspirations with quality certified seed potatoes. He buys the seed as certified tubers the size of marbles, and grows them on at his farm. He offers us several different cultivars.



The seed potatoes in the paddock are inspected regularly throughout the growing season by qualified plant inspectors from the Department of Primary Industries. They are specialists at recognising potato diseases and pests.

When the potatoes are harvested the farmer is given a certified seed potato label. These are only given to farmers who have had these crop inspections. The crop may have a small percentage of scab because it is impossible to guarantee 100% clean potatoes in an entire paddock - the inspectors allow a percentage for this.

When we take delivery of the potatoes at our Garden Centre, our staff check every single spud before we bag them. Any that show cuts, scab-like marks, or bruising are removed and thrown out.

Two of our staff were farmers and recognise potato diseases. Tasmanian quarantine is very strict. Tasmania has a very good reputation for good potato growers and potatoes. The farmer that supplies us also supplies green grocers and supermarkets.

We take delivery of seed potatoes in 50 kg bags in May or June with the cultivar and seed certificate on the bag. The cold weather keeps the spuds dormant. We store them for sale in late Winter until late Spring or when we sell out, whichever comes first. As soon as the temperatures warm up the eyes start to develop and the seed potato is almost ready to plant.

Potato cultivars are bred for different culinary purposes. Some cultivars have been grown for many years and they are still largely disease-resistant. Newer varieties are continually trialled, numbered and released with a new name. Some are commercial varieties with plant breeder's rights and so are not available to the home gardener.

The varieties we sell are Dutch Cream, Desiree, Nicola, Pink Eyes, Kennebec, Kipfler, Purple Congo, Up To Date, Tasman, King Edwards, Brownell, Sebago, Bintje, Bismark, Pontiac.

Below are some descriptions.

Bintje

Is used for all culinary purposes, although some say it does not mash very well. Commercially it is used for French fries. A mid- season cultivar with oval to long tubers and a smooth pale yellow skin, shallow eyes and pale yellow flesh. Tubers can be susceptible to powdery scab. The plants have a slightly spreading habit with large rigid dark dull green leaves. Origin Holland released in 1910.



Bismark

Introduced in Tasmania in about 1880 when known as Prince Bismark. A good strain was isolated in 1928 and called the Silverskin Bismark. Over time this name was dropped and it became just Bismark. An early cultivar origin probably Germany, oval creamy white tubers and flesh with purple eyes. Makes good new potatoes for boiling, also chips when mature but not good for baking.

Plants are medium height open and erect, leaves dull green flowers light purple.

Brownell

Mid- season. Brownish-pink tubers, medium to deep eyes white flesh. Excellent for boiling but not baking. Plants are tall vigorous and upright, flowers red purple with white tips.

Tubers can get hollow heart, can crack and get powdery scab but only moderately susceptible. Very resistant to bruising, many tonnes shipped to the Sydney market in the late 1930s and 40s.

Origin USA, released about 1881, under the name Adirondack, selected in Australia 1908-12 and named Brownell.

Coliban

Australian cultivar bred by Victorian Department of Agriculture, released 1974. Mid-season white round or oval tubers with shallow eyes often has a blue blush. Used for boiling, chips, baking.

Susceptible to powdery scab.

Tall plants erect with small light green leaves and white flowers.

King Edward

A cultivar grown in Tasmania and used for baking, chips and boiling. Mid-season long oval tubers have white skin with pink blotches white creamy flesh and shallow eyes. Flowers are purple and white tipped. Origin UK released in 1902.

Pink Eye

Early cultivar grown mainly in southern Tasmania. Creamy white tubers, blotched with purple, tend to be small and round with deep depressions.

Eyes are very pink the flesh is yellow and should be waxy indicating low starch content. Used for baking and boiling as new potatoes.

In recent years this cultivar may have drifted and is not as waxy as it once was.

Susceptible to powdery scab.

Plants are tall vigorous, open and erect with small dark green leaves. Purple flowers origin unknown, included in Australian seed certification scheme in 1944.



Pontiac

Mid-season attractive round red skinned tubers with shallow eyes white flesh, used for boiling, chips and baking.

Susceptible to powdery scab.

Plants have grey green leaves, light purple flowers origin USA, released 1938.

Sebago

Popular in Australia. All purpose culinary use. Mid- season creamy skinned shallow eyes, oval tubers and white flesh.

Tends to rot in storage. Plants are tall upright large leaves, lilac flowers.

Tasman

Mid-season all purpose cultivar. Bright pink tubers, shallow red eyes white flesh. Used for baking, boiling and chips. Uniform-sized tubers. Can break when boiled and produces dark coloured chips and baked potatoes.

Very susceptible to powdery scab.

Large vigorous semi-erect plants. Pale purple flowers. Tasmanian and Victorian Department of Agriculture selection in 1961. Named after Abel Tasman. Released in 1974.

Up to date

Popular all purpose cultivar in Tasmania. Very good baking variety also good for boiling and chips.

Mid-season with flat oval tubers creamy white skin and cream flesh. Vigorous tall plants with mid green leaves and light red purple flowers. A Scottish cultivar released in 1894.

There are many other varieties. In 2008 garden centres were alerted to a pest called the tomato-potato psyllid which is causing damage to and reducing yield of potato crops in New Zealand. The psyllid is an insect that can infect tubers with a bacterium which kills plant cells in potato tubers and displays a 'zebra striping' in potatoes after frying.

When do I plant potatoes?

If you are in a warm area with minimal chance of frost you could technically plant all year round, but the short days in winter and colder soils would slow growth down.

Inland cold regions are different - you wait until the soils and days get warmer, about mid to late September in Tasmania or Victoria and aim to get the plant growing strongly after the last frosts.

Cold soils slow potato growth down warm soils speed growth up. Keep a diary of the approximate dates of your last frosts.

Where I live I cannot plant them until late September at the earliest, but in warmer coastal areas you can plant mid to late winter. Light air frosts, that we get in Spring, may damage the leaves but if the plant is growing strongly with the longer warmer days of late spring and early Summer it will have the ability to keep on growing, several hard frosts in a row will set back a plant or damage the crop.

Soils can still be wet after winter but can rapidly dry out in late spring, so it makes more sense to plant in early spring when the soils are moist but not too wet or too dry.

When do I plant potatoes so they will be ready for Christmas?

Early varieties like Pink Eyes or Bismarks will be ready as new potatoes by Christmas. Mid-season cultivars like King Edward will mature much later.

How do I avoid potato scab?

Some of the older varieties are more susceptible, so you have to manage soil conditions so scab is not a problem. Do not over lime your soil, and make sure that spuds have not been grown in the same place the previous year. Potatoes prefer slightly acid conditions.

Which ones are good for baking, mashing, roasting, chips?

This comes with experience. Potato growers know these traits inside out - people know what they like in a spud, and everyone has a favourite variety.

Look at our above varieties.

How do I grow potatoes?

Straw.

A thick bed of straw outside on a concrete floor can provide a decent crop of potatoes if space is limited or if you have shallow soils.

Raised beds or planter bags.

Excellent because you can manipulate the soil and have superb drainage.

Deep well drained soils.

Plant the spuds deeper than their own size about 0.8m apart and mound the soil up as the plant grows, or create trenches and plant the potatoes directly into the already ridged trenches this aids flood irrigation later.

Some folk still use superphosphate, others blood and bone and organic fertiliser. Do not over-fertilise with nitrogen or you will get a lot of leafy growth and small tubers, and please water well in December to February as they need a lot of water to develop tubers.

When do I harvest potatoes?

When the tops begin to die down you can harvest. You can leave most varieties in the ground until ready to dig, unless you are in an area where high rainfall and early frosts will cause rotting. Some varieties are more prone to rotting in the ground than others.

If we have a really wet Winter potatoes sitting in wet ground may rot. Once lifted, store in a cool dry shed in large brown paper or hessian bags preferably in the dark. Kennebecs can be prone to greening in storage.

I was reminded by a subscriber that bumble bees are not welcome in Victoria and I must emphasise that my last newsletter was extolling the virtues of the honey bee. Spring for us home gardeners has arrived and the work is on.

A birdie with a yellow bill
Hopped upon the window sill,
Cocked his shining eye and said:
"Ain't you shamed, you sleepy head!"

Happy gardening wherever you may be.

