

It's almost St. Patrick's Day: Time to plant potatoes

Rachael Boyle
Phillips-Rooks District Extension Agent
Agriculture and Natural Resources

Have you been ready for the garden season and just can't wait with the warmer temperatures we've been having. Well it's time to plant potatoes. Anytime from mid-to late-March is fine for potato planting.

Be sure to buy seed potatoes rather than using those bought for cooking. Seed potatoes are certified disease free and have plenty of starch to sprout as quickly as soil temperatures allow.

Most seed potatoes can be cut into four pieces – though large potatoes may yield more. Each seed should weigh between 1 ½ to 2 ounces and likely have more than one eye.

Each pound of seed potatoes should yield 8 to 10 pieces. Cut the seed 2 to 3 days before planting so that freshly cut surfaces have a chance to toughen, which provides a protective coating. Plant each seed piece 1 to 2 inches deep and 8 to 12 inches apart in rows.

Though it is important to plant potatoes in March, they emerge slowly. It is often mid- to late-April before new plants poke their way through the soil. As the potatoes grow, pull soil up to the base of the plants. New potatoes are borne above the planted seed piece and it is important to keep sunlight from hitting the new potatoes. Exposed potatoes will turn green and produce a poisonous substance called solanine. Keeping the potatoes covered will prevent this.

For more information, please contact the local K-State Research and Extension Office. K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer.