



Newsletter

March 2017 - The Spud Edition



Top Tips for Tasty Tatties



One of the most popular vegetables grown on allotments is the potato. I certainly have always grown them. It is one of the highlights of my horticultural year to dig that first shaw and take them home to have that first taste of my own tatties - from plot to plate in 30 minutes! Delicious! I usually manage to grow a fairly respectable crop so I thought I would share some of my cultivation tips. It's the same every year for as they say "if you always do what you always did you always get what you always got."

First thing is **SEED and VARIETY SELECTION**. Using certified seed is important as you are guaranteed they are disease free. I never usually keep seed from my own crops. New seed is not expensive, especially if you use FEDAGA's potato purchasing scheme, so why take the risk? They say the best size for a seed potato is about that of an egg. I tend to favour a tuber a bit bigger than that and discard any really small ones and of course any that do not look perfect. Regarding varieties I grow for flavour as opposed to crop size. For first early I go for white Duke of York. Second early Charlotte, a lovely salad potato for the summer. Main crop Desiree (Delia Smith considers this the best all round potato for cooking) or King Edward. Mentioning flavour, for the last few years I have participated in FEDAGA's SASA scheme where you get 3 tubers (not available commercially) to grow. I got a variety called Arran Luxury and what a flavour! Something out of yesteryear.



So what about **PLANTING**? I usually plant about the last week in March. I dig a trench 6 inches deep and put some compost in the trench. If you have comfrey (full of potassium and a great organic fertiliser) on the plot it is good to chop up the leaves and add them to the trench. I used to use horse manure but this can be contaminated by aminopryalid - a herbicide used on pasture land. It passes through the horse's digestive system but is still active in the manure and causes potato crops to fail. Worse, it can linger in the ground for several seasons. I spread a few handfuls of blood fish and bone along the soil

from the trench so when I backfill it is available when the tubers start to grow.

SPACING for earlies is a foot between tubers and two feet between rows with main crops getting fifteen inches and two and a half feet respectively.

Planted late March the leaves will usually emerge about the second week in May when we are usually frost free at Craigentenny. Although the tubers are too deep to be bothered by frost, the emerging foliage can get frosted and go brown. I have never found it to be fatal to the plant. Just nip the damaged leaf off if you want. A couple of weeks after they have emerged I give a top dressing of blood fish and bone or potato fertiliser and a wee hoe between the rows to check the weeds. When the plants are about 6 inches high I draw the earth around them in the classic potato ridges. Before the foliage closes over the rows I give a final dressing of blood fish and bone. This maybe overkill but potatoes need plenty of feeding.



I try to avoid **WATERING**. It's good for the environment and in Scotland there is usually sufficient moisture at 6 inches down. The exception would be if the ground was very dry in the last few weeks before the crop is ready. At this point the potatoes are growing fast and might need a good drink.

Well, that's my method of growing potatoes and it has stood me in good stead over the years.

I hope it might be a useful guide to new ploholders and that there might even be something in it for the more experienced.

So what would be your top tips for tasty tatties? The Newsletter would be delighted to know!

John McKinlay
Craigentenny

This Year's Spending Priorities



The first thing to note is that there is to be a reduction of £5000 in the Council allotment estate budget, as reported in our November issue. After "standing charges" such as wages, utilities and trade waste uplifts are taken into account this represents 25% of what's left for repairs and maintenance, so a hefty cut.

FEDAGA has canvassed all Council operated sites and received a surprisingly small number of replies - so maybe that is an indication that for the time being all is relatively well. The main theme appears to be the need for tree pruning. Indeed, FEDAGA is aware of one site where tree pruning was agreed (and paid for) 4 years ago but is still waiting for the job to be done. Hopefully, this will be the year the problem of overhanging branches casting shade on plots will be attended to.

In alphabetical order, the jobs agreed to be dealt with are:

Bridgend - pruning of trees on south side (£1200).

Carrick Knowe - tree pruning (£400), welding work on barrow shed hasp.

Chesser Crescent - unsafe drops on either side of paths to be discussed on site.

Claremont Park - path repairs (£400), new notice board (£450), replace 2 taps (£450).

Craigentenny - remove or reduce trees at the south end (£1000).

Dumbryden - path work: redusting and making safe (£1700), building work on communal premises (£2000).

Ferry Road - toilet needs dealt with, tree work, wall pointing and fence repairs (£1000).

Inverleith - cut down non-fruit trees, clear around outside of fence.

Leith Links - trees in park need pruned (causing shade), lag pipes.

Midmar - matting supplied for steep paths, tree pruning (£500), hardstanding for trade waste bin at entrance to Field 1 (£260), new field drain, wooden sleepers to shore up plots 21 to 25 (£1595), new gates. Northfield Drive - strimming (£153), fence repair (£140). Pilrig Park - upgrade noticeboard. Redhall - perimeter fence and wall work (£150). Saughton Mains - new gates. Warriston - tree pruning, perimeter enclosure for leaf mould bin. West Mains - request for leaf mould delivery being dealt with. Additionally, replacement noticeboards are noted for Cambridge Avenue, Chesser Crescent, Craigentenny, Findlay Avenue, Hutchison Loan, Kirkliston, Leith Links and Saughton Mains but as they're not a priority they won't be actioned this year.



You will note that some of these items have yet to be costed. FEDAGA hopes to meet with the Allotment Officer this month to discuss these matters further and pin him down on timescales and undisclosed costings. Where appropriate charges may be levied on third parties (eg. Edinburgh Leisure where in the case of parks or golf courses it is their trees which are casting shade). FEDAGA is vigilant that if money can come from a source other than the allotment budget then that will be pursued. Requests for communal compost bins have been referred back as [Waste Action grants](#) are available for anything that reduces landfill.

There were celebrations at Lady Road when the decrepit gate was FINALLY!! repaired. Perseverance pays off.

Upcoming Events



Seed Swap 2017

Sunday 5th March 2-4pm

Ready, steady, grow!

Gear up for the growing season at the annual seed swap event at Gorgie City Farm.

Swap your spare seeds or make a donation, talk to experts, ask questions, share experiences.

Children's activities.

All welcome!



Supported by the Edible Gardening Project,
from the Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh



Sunday 5th March - "**Gardener's Question Time**" led by lifelong horticulturalist George Anderson of 'Beechgrove Garden' fame. With him on the panel are

* garden designer Becca Duncan from Blossoming Gardens, Inveresk
* allotment expert Peter J Wright MBE, recently retired chairman of FEDAGA

* RHS Britain in Bloom Community Champion Dr Stan da Prato of East Lothian.

Your ticket includes refreshments, free seed swap, tombola and an opportunity to buy local homemade crafts, preserves and cakes.

Tickets are available locally from Earthy, Porty Hardware, the Velvet Easel (£5) and [Eventbrite](#) (£5.87)

Venue: Portobello Community Centre, 3 Adelphi Grove, EH15 1AP.

www.bordersorganicgardeners.org

SUNDAY
5th MARCH 2017
11am – 3pm

POTATO DAY

& Green Fair
Produce Stalls, Garden Supplies, Cafe

BORDER UNION
Springwood Park

KELSO

TD5 8LS

ADMISSION £1.50 – Children free, car-parking free

Scottish Charity No SCO 26903



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BLIGHT-RESISTANT varieties

EXPERT GARDENING ADVICE

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES

Thursday 9th March - "A Hut Of One's Own" an evening with Emily Chappell. This event is a launch of Emily's new book: "Allotments are places to grow food – but they are so much more than that. They are also places that encourage spontaneity, exploration, learning, sharing, restful activity and camaraderie. This book is a celebration of the allotment hut and the wonderful invention and resourcefulness that makes each one unique. The original illustrations offer inspiration for how to create your own, very special shed. This is the ideal gift book for allotment folk, gardeners or those curious about the quirkier side of life." Venue: Golden Hare Books, 68 St Stephen Street EH3 5AQ. More details [here](#).



**THE FEDAGA SHOP WILL BE OPEN FOR BUSINESS
FROM 2 TO 3.30PM
ON SUNDAYS, 26TH FEBRUARY
AND 5TH AND 12TH MARCH.**

**FOR SALE: SEED POTATOES, ONION AND
SHALLOT SETS AT DISCOUNTED PRICES.**

**IF YOU DIDN'T MANAGE TO PARTICIPATE IN
YOUR SITE ORDER - NOW'S YOUR CHANCE.**

**DON'T DELAY. BE EARLY FOR THE BEST
CHOICE. WHEN IT'S GONE, IT'S GONE.**

**INVERLEITH ALLOTMENTS,
EAST FETTES AVENUE.**

AND DON'T FORGET THE ONLINE SHOP AT - [HTTP://WWW.FEDAGA.ORG.UK/SEED-SCHEME](http://www.fedaga.org.uk/seed-scheme)

West Mains Open Day – Advance Notice: Sunday 30th July.
Save the date for this annual showcase event, to which West Mains Allotments Association invites local neighbours, people from other sites and the friends and families of plot-holders to the site to help celebrate allotment gardening at West Mains. More information nearer the time, but expect a produce stall, afternoon teas and other festivities.
If you are planning an Open Day this year, please contact FEDAGA so we can help publicise it for you.



The 2017 Edinburgh

Allotment Show:

Saturday 2nd September.

Put it in your diary now.