

## **Bagged Potatoes ~ From Seeding to Harvesting**

A couple of years ago, after speaking to my sister about how she grows potatoes in containers in Prince George, we decided to try containerized growing. At the Nursery, we are using a flexible container (see photograph) called a Grow-Bag.

The Grow-Bag is made of strong, woven polyethylene, has two firmly stitched handles attached to it, and several drainage holes near the bottom. They were designed for to lessen the root-circling as the a growing tree matures, but work wonderfully for potatoes.

Here's why.

Contrary to popular belief, potatoes do not form from the roots of the seed potato; they grow from the tender shoots sent out by the stem of the plant. The seed potato provides food for the growing plant and gradually disappears.

For those who have grown potatoes in the ground, you know that they need to be hilled as they grow. As you hill the plant (kind of like building a volcano as the potato grows), you are creating an environment in which the tubers can grow.

When you use a Grow-Bag, hilling the plant can be done without any worry of damaging the shoots that will produce potatoes. When planting, simply roll down the sides of the bag to a height of about four inches. Add a couple of inches of soil, place the seed potatoes ('eye' side up) and cover with another two inches.

As the plant matures and gains height, roll up the sides a few inches to accommodate more soil and your 'hilling' is done. Repeat this process as the plant matures to flowering stage. Once the flowers are depleted, you can harvest the potatoes.

How to harvest? Just upend the bag; your crop will be right there for easy pickings. You may miss the potato hunt when harvesting bag-grown potatoes, but will you miss the annoyance of stabbing the odd potato with the garden fork?

By the way, if you simply cannot wait and want to savour the taste of young, homegrown potatoes, roll down a side of the bag and sneak a few of the delicious tubers.

After harvesting, turn the bags inside out and clean them, then lay them in the sun to dry. Store for the winter. You can reuse the bags the following year when you're ready to plant again.

Another great reason to grow potatoes in a Grow-Bag is that potatoes, like many annual vegetable crops should not be planted in the same soil two years running. By using 'new' soil, you automatically avoid this problem.

Like many berry fruits and vegetables, potatoes grow best in slightly acidic soil. You may want to do a soil test to ensure the pH is lower than 7.0, (neutral). Or, use a proprietary blend such as the 'Veggie Blend' at Grasslands Nursery. It has been tested for pH levels, macronutrients, organic matter content and salinity to ensure it provides optimum growing potential.

-----

The Permablitz at Grasslands last Saturday was a great success! Because of the number of enthusiastic people who showed up for the event, (and the ease of digging in our rock-free soil), we were able to install the food forest in just six hours. Thank you Good Omens (Summerland) for catering: the food was outstanding!

-----

*Toni Boot is the founder and owner of Grasslands Nursery in Summerland, a nursery specializing in sustainable gardening. Comments and suggestions for future Water Wisdom columns may be directed to her at [grassnursery@telus.net](mailto:grassnursery@telus.net) or through [www.grasslandsnursery.ca](http://www.grasslandsnursery.ca)*