Irish Potato

Sun: Plant in full sun (6 to 8 hours). Space 10 to 12 inches apart within rows or 2 plants per 5-gallon container. Plant in February.

Soil: Amend with organic matter to create a well-drained soil. Avoid planting in unamended sandy or heavy clay soils.

For proper drainage in a container garden, use potting mix and ensure containers have drainage holes. Alternatively, consider using self-watering containers.

Water: Keep soil consistently moist, but not saturated. Apply 1 to 2 inches of water each week and more during hot summer days. Avoid wetting leaves to avoid fungal diseases. Mulch helps retain moisture.

Plant: Plant seed pieces 10 to 12 inches apart and cover them in a furrow 2 to 3 inches deep. Space the rows 24 inches apart. Each seed piece should have at least one good eye.

Fertilize: In the absence of a soil test, apply an all-purpose fertilizer (8-8-8 or 10-10-10) at planting, according to label directions. Reapply 4 to 6 inches from the stem (side-dress), 4 to 6 weeks after planting.

Insects/Diseases/Weeds: Scout plants frequently for insect and disease damage. Use insecticidal soap (for soft-bodied insects) or Bt dust or spray (for caterpillars, or worms). Spray fungicide regularly to suppress common fungal diseases. Always follow label instructions. Mulch inhibits weeds and diseases.

Harvest: Harvest when tubers are fully grown and foliage starts to wither. Small, delicate potatoes can be harvested 7 to 8 weeks after planting. Mature potatoes can be harvested 3 to 4 months after planting.

Other: Do not buy potatoes from a grocery store for planting. Buy seed potatoes that are free of disease. Seed pieces should be cut 5 to 6 days before planting and allowed to dry.

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