

Irish Potatoes

in Mississippi

Fresh-market potatoes are graded according to size, shape, and number of defects.



Soils

Choose a well-drained loam, sandy loam, or loamy sand for planting Irish potatoes. Poorly drained soils cause seed-piece decay and poor quality tubers at harvest. Make high beds to keep tubers drier and to prevent sunburn.

Potatoes may be grown in soils with a pH of 5.4 to 5.8 to protect against scab. A pH level below 5.4 will seriously affect yield. Soil pH above 5.8 will grow excellent potatoes if the scab organism is not present.

Varieties

The processor will dictate variety.

Red: Red LaSoda, LaRouge.

White: Superior, Atlantic, Norchip, and Kennebec (not scab-resistant).

Yellow: Yukon Gold

Seed

Use only certified seed potatoes. Cut into 2-ounce pieces and treat with fungicide before planting. Between 1,200 to 2,000 pounds of Irish potatoes seed are required to plant an acre for commercial production.

Spacing

Plan your rows 36 to 38 inches apart. Place seed pieces 6 to 8 inches deep and 9 to 10 inches apart within the row. Tubers are only set above the seed piece so deep planting is essential.

Planting Dates

The Irish potato is a cool-weather crop. Early planting is necessary to give maturity before temperatures become too hot. Plants can withstand light frost, but hard frosts can severely damage plants. It is difficult to get a good stand for a fall crop due to high soil temperatures at planting.

Zone	Spring	Fall
Coastal Counties	Jan. 20- Feb. 15	Aug. 20 - Sept. 1
South Central	Jan. 20- Mar. 1	Aug. 15 - Aug. 25
Central	Jan. 20- Mar. 1	Aug. 10 - Aug. 20
North Central	Feb. 1- Mar. 10	Aug. 5 - Aug. 15
North	Feb. 10- Mar. 15	Aug. 1 - Aug. 10

Fertilizer

Apply fertilizers according to soil test results. Distribute the fertilizer in a 2-inch band to the side and slightly below the seed pieces.

Weed Control

Choices of preemergence herbicides include trifluralin (Treflan), EPTC (Eptam), metolachlor (Dual), metribuzin (Sencor, Lexone), and pendimethalin (Prowl). Sethoxydim (Poast) is labeled for postemergence grass control. Consult the most recent publication of *Weed Control Guidelines for Mississippi*. Follow label instructions.

Cultivation

Keep cultivation shallow (no more than 2 inches deep). Maintain bed height.

Irrigation

Approximately 1 ½ inches of water are needed every 10 days. Supplement rainfall, where necessary, with overhead or furrow irrigation. Do not irrigate within 15 days of harvest.

Disease Control

Common disease problems with symptoms are described. For treatment, consult Extension Publication 554 *Disease, Insect, and Nematode Control Recommendations for Commercial Vegetables in Mississippi*.

Symptoms	Disease
Dark spot at base of stem; yellow, dwarfed, rolled leaves that wilt and die; rotten tubers.	Black leg
Small, hard, scurfy patches on surface; will not wash off but easily scratched off.	Black scurf
Brown concentric spots on older leaves.	Early blight
Indefinite water-soaked spots on leaflet margins; greasy spots on fruit.	Late blight
Rough, scabby, pitted spots on tubers.	Scab
White mold growth on seed pieces.	Seed piece rot
Streaking, crinkling, or rolling of leaves.	Virus complex
Reduced plant growth and yield; leaves are dark green or yellow.	Nematodes

Insect Control

Common pests of the Irish potato include the Colorado potato beetle, flea beetle, potato tuber-worm, and wireworms. Protect the potatoes

against soil insects by using a preplant treatment. For recommended controls, consult Extension Publication 554.

Harvest

The skin on the tubers should be “set” before harvesting. This is achieved by killing the vine about 2 weeks before harvest. Use only EPA-approved vine killers, or shred the potato vines. Immediately wash and grade fresh-market potatoes. Do not wash or cool processing potatoes.

Grading

Fresh-market potatoes are graded according to size, shape, and number of defects. The grades include U.S. Extra No. 1 (2 ¼-inch diameter or 5 ounces in weight), U.S. Commercial (1 ⅞-inch diameter), and No. 2 (½-inch diameter).

Packing

Potatoes are packed in 100-pound sacks, 50-pound cartons or sacks, and 10- or 20-pound film bags.

Yield

In a good year, you can expect 20,000 pounds of Irish potatoes per acre.

Production Costs

These production figures below are approximate costs per acre for commercial production of Irish potatoes.

Seed	\$ 216
Fertilizer	60
Chemicals	78
Irrigation equipment	120
Equipment	255
Labor	375
Interest on operating capital	25
Total	\$ 1,129

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The information given here is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names is made with the understanding that no discrimination is intended of other products that may also be suitable.

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