



PLANTING

Planting for the maincrop 2021 has started. The recent cold snap has not significantly affected soil temperatures so far as they are still above normal for this time of year, however it is always best to check field temperature before planting as this may vary depending on location. Soils are slower to dry out in the cold conditions so fields ploughed this week will have to be left for a few days before cultivations begin, so make sure that conditions are suitable for planting. Once soil conditions are dry enough planting should start as temperatures are above 7°C.

[Table 1; Met Eireann Soil Temperatures](#)

Station	2021 Av. Soil Temp April 5 th °C	2021 Difference from normal °C
Cork Airport	10.1	+3.1
Dublin Airport	10.0	+3.1
Johnstown Castle	10.2	+2.7
Malin Head	9.2	+2.2
Oak Park	11.0	+4.1

Watch cultivation depth, remember soils are wetter the deeper you go down and if you are going deeper than 35 cm you are going to slow all operations, wear more parts, burn more diesel and cost more money. Don't forget that drills will slump after planting by up to 3cms (1 inch) so bear this in mind when you are calculating your desired final seed depth. When planting is in full swing don't forget to carry out the normal daily checks to make sure applicators are working correctly, seed is planted at the correct depth and seed spacing is where it should be etc. This will help to avoid any surprises when they start to emerge.

If you intend to apply a nematicide for wireworm or pcn control, to achieve the best effect from either Nemathorin or Vydate 10G, they should be applied after the destoning operation

onto the bed in front of the planter. Some growers have applied them pre-destoning with a seed drill which is not ideal and control has been very variable.

Pic 1. Wireworm on a potato 2020



[Click the link below for a video of the AHDB nematocide trials from the UK which show how to get the best effect from nematocides.](#)

[AHDB Nematocide Trial](#)

SEED

Check all seed before planting, if you are using chitted seed be careful loading and handling, chits should be robust and short enough to withstand the loading process. If they have long sprouts these are likely to be knocked off during the planting process and will lead to uneven emergence which will have an effect on the uniformity of the daughters. This can lead to issues at the tail end of the season when you are trying to burn down crops. It can also affect maturity for crops destined for processing as some tubers may be more mature than others. The only option at this stage may be to run the seed over a roller table to knock off the long sprouts and then ventilate so the wounds will heal, this will prevent disease spread in the seed.

The seed coming out of the store should be colder than the soil, even if they have been taken out a day or two in advance, this will avoid any shocks after planting. If you plant straight out of store watch out for condensation on the seed which can block up seed treatment applicators. Ideally the eyes on the tubers should just be open, these will get away quicker and emerge faster than seed straight out of the fridge.

While the 2022 season is still a while away it is important to continue to talk to your supplier to check the availability of seed as this may change your planting plans. While the supply of Rooster should be fine, some of the other smaller volume varieties might be difficult to source so plan in time and where necessary provisionally indicate your requirements for 2022, this will give the suppliers time to source them.

Fertiliser

When calculating your fertiliser requirements remember to think about how you are going to desiccate them. Spotlight Plus and Gozai are both slower than diquat was and so will need a longer time to desiccate the crop. They also work best when the crop is starting to senesce itself naturally. Therefore excess nitrogen and more particularly late nitrogen will prolong the green canopy in the crop and may make it more difficult to knock it down next autumn. Each different variety will probably need a different approach when it comes to nitrogen depending on their canopy size and longevity. British Queen is classified as medium haulm longevity, Rooster, Piper and Golden Wonder are long haulm longevity while Markies and Cara are very long haulm longevity.

For processing varieties high levels of nitrogen can delay maturity in the tubers and as a result can affect fry colours. The further north you go the bigger the issue tends to be. This can often be a big problem in Markies or Maris Piper. For this reason avoid the temptation of applying top dressings to “drive” the crop on. Once the canopy meets full cover little nitrogen is actually needed in the crop. For the same reason other trace elements and liquid fertiliser applications on to the canopy need to be questioned as to their value and the possibility of delaying crop maturity.

Rooster on the other hand can be a bit more forgiving, but not much, at burn down once the dry matters are at 21-22%. However we have often seen in the past coming up to mid/late August, crops under 20% DM and have the bulk of the tubers in the 50-80mm range, this again causes a dilemma at burn down. Kerr Pink’s can often have a similar problem, massive canopies in late August with tubers still bulking, low dry matters and the possibility of hollow hearts.

Apply all the compound fertiliser requirements into the seed bed. Potatoes poorly utilise phosphate due to its small root structure, so a well prepared seedbed is essential for good nutrient uptake. Tables 2-4 show the recommended rates of N, P & K for the different crops and are based on the Teagasc Green Book 2016 guidelines (Ch. 17 Pg. 104-109).

These tables are indicative, they are not definite rates, growers should use their own experience, soil type, location, variety and planting date when calculating the actual amounts required. If planting is delayed into May be prepared to reduce the rates of nitrogen by approximately 10%.

[Table 2: The nutrient requirement kg/ha \(units/acre\) for maincrop varieties >120 days e.g. Rooster/Golden wonder are:](#)

Soil Index (P & K)	N kg/ha (units/ac)	P kg/ha (units/ac)	K kg/ha (units/ac)
1	170 (136)	125 (100)	305 (244)
2	145 (116)	100 (80)	245 (196)
3	120 (96)	75 (60)	185 (148)
4	95 (76)	50* (40)	120 (96)

[Table 3: The nutrient requirement kg/ha \(units/acre\) for salad potatoes 60-90 days e.g. Maris Peer/Charlotte are:](#)

Soil Index (P & K)	N kg/ha (units/ac)	P kg/ha (units/ac)	K kg/ha (units/ac)
1	120 (96)	125 (100)	245 (196)
2	100 (80)	115 (92)	185 (148)
3	80 (64)	100 (80)	120 (96)
4	70 (56)	50 (40)*	65 (52)

[Table 4: The nutrient requirement kg/ha \(units/acre\) for seed potatoes are:](#)

Soil Index (P & K)	N kg/ha (units/ac)	P kg/ha (units/ac)	K kg/ha (units/ac)
1	155 (124)	125 (100)	170 (136)
2	130 (104)	115 (92)	140 (112)
3	105 (84)	100 (80)	110 (88)
4	80 (64)	85 (68)*	80 (64)

*Where soil P test is above 15 mg/l, no P fertiliser is necessary

For more details click the link below and go to pages 105 - 110

[Teagasc Green Book 2021](#)

Earlies

Crops that were planted have grown relatively well in the last few weeks before the cold snap at the beginning of April. The bright sunny weather has increased soil temperatures and helped emergence. Crops under fleece are growing well although the recent windy and cold weather may cause damage under the covers.

Where weed control was not applied options are limited on emerged crops to Titus or Basagran, check labels for details and suitable varieties. Crops still to emerge can receive normal pre-emergence applications although again there are variety restrictions. Products containing Metribuzin e.g. Sencorex should only be applied pre-emergence on earlies at a max rate of 0.75 Kg/ha on light soils (check individual product labels for further details).

Grass weeds however can be controlled using graminicides such as Falcon, Stratos Ultra Pilot Ultra or Fusilade Max and should be used as part of an overall farm IPM programme to control bromes, wild oats, volunteer cereals and scutch.

Up Coming Events

Teagasc are hosting a webinar on seed production to address some of the main issues that growers face. The webinar takes place on [Thursday April 15th from 6.30pm.](#)

The main topics covered will include;

- Brexit and seed imports
- Successfully growing high quality seed
- New developments in Virus monitoring
- Virus control in the field
- Questions and Answer session to an expert panel

IASIS points will be available (with zoom log in)

For further details and to register click on the link below;

[Potato Seed Webinar 2021](#)



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Our mailing address is:

Teagasc
Oak Park
Carlow, Co. Carlow
Ireland