



PLANTING

Soil temperatures are lower than this time last year by almost 3.0°C in many cases (see table 1 below). Soils therefore may also be slower to dry out than last year so make sure that conditions are suitable for planting. Once soil conditions are dry enough planting should start as temperatures are above 7°C. 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.

Table 1; Met Eireann Soil Temperature

Station	2020 Average Soil Temp Mar 29 th °C	2019 Average Soil Temp April 1 st °C
Cork Airport	6.4	9.3
Dublin Airport	6.3	9.1
J'stown Castle	6.5	9.1
Malin Head	7.1	9.0
Oak park	7.0	9.8

As mentioned in the last newsletter don't forget to check the cultivation depth, 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 you 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 etc. This will help

to avoid any surprises when they start to emerge.

Mocap is no longer available for wireworm control (last date of use 21st March 2020) so choice of product is limited to **Nemathorin**. The rate of application is 20 kg/ha, this can be broadcast and should be incorporated in one run as close to the planter as possible.

SEED

Check all seed before planting, if they have long sprouts 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.

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.

As mentioned at the recent potato conference seed availability for 2021 may be an issue so consider applying for the seed certification scheme to grow some of your own seed for next season. See the DAFM website for details <https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/farmingsectors/crops/potatoes/seedpotatocertificationscheme/>

FERTILISER

When calculating your fertiliser requirements remember to think about how you are going to desiccate them. Spotlight is slower than diquat was and so will need a longer time to desiccate the crop. 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), which is available at

<https://www.teagasc.ie/media/website/publications/2016/soil-fertility-green.pdf>

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

May Issue; The 2020 guide to weed control will be included in the next newsletter.

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