**TRANQUIL FARMS**

**OREGON CITY, OR Updated November 2018**

MAKAH OZETTE FINGERLING POTATO GROWING

The following instructions are based on our growing experiences over the past 3 years and information gathered along the way from universities and other potato growers.

PRIOR TO PLANTING: Keep the seed potatoes in the dark, temp in the low 40s is best. Do not cut potatoes before planting no matter the size, this allows disease to enter the tuber. If there are any sprouts on the potatoes do not remove them. Note: It’s common to cut most potato seed into smaller chunks, but since makah’s are relatively small, this isn’t necessary. If you feel you have a very large potato and want to cut it, do so, but wait a couple days before planting-as fresh cut potatoes would be more susceptible to disease. One potato is hopefully one plant, but sometimes they just don’t do their thing.  Seed potato is very small to start with.  The seed potato contains ALL the energy available to the plant to grow, for at least the first month or 6 weeks.  That seed potato uses up its entire “self” to sustain the plant until it can get sprouted out of the ground and into the sun, and form sufficient roots to get growing successfully so you don’t want to cut it short by cutting the potato in half.  When you dig up at the end of the season, you can sometimes see the empty potato skin if you are looking for it!  We usually do!

PLANTING: Once your soil is at least 45 degrees you can plant seed potato at least 4 inches under the soil, and put them at least 8-10 inches or more apart. You can plant in the ground, in a raised bed or even in a large flower pot. They will emerge in 14-21 days. We usually start planting by the middle of April. It’s hard to say for the exact number of seed potatoes in a pound as our seed potato stock varies from 1 to 3 inch sized potatoes (we sell the larger ones for people who are going to eat them), so it will depend on what size is in stock in February.  I would roughly estimate 8-10 to a pound. We recommend buying more than you need, as sometimes potatoes don’t grow for one reason or another. If you are planting in a container, we recommend at least 5 or 6 potatoes per small container or mound.   Note: see website for instructions to grow using a potato tower. This saves space and enables you to grow them pretty much anywhere, plus there’s no digging for harvest!

GROWING: When plants are about 8 inches tall hill a couple inches of dirt around the stem. They need water at least every other day for the first few months. Once they turn yellow, stop watering.

As it matures the plant will eventually flower and then turn yellow, which is normal. A few weeks after this you can cut down the plants to about 6 inches above the ground, which will make the plant put the rest of its energy into the potatoes underground. Otherwise just let the plants fall over.

HARVEST: We usually begin to harvest in September but have left them in the ground and harvested into November. The potatoes are mature by about 120 days but can be left in the ground for many months they will just continue to grow in size. Remaining harvest needs to be done before the ground freezes usually in December. Be careful digging them up. If using a shovel start digging out about 12 inches from the base of the plant and lift plant and dirt slowly. It is best to complete the harvest of each plant by hand, digging around in the hill and below for potatoes. Do not leave any part of the potato plant in the area to avoid retaining any disease in your soil, throw out in trash, do not compost. The advantage to growing in a potato tower, is you simply knock the tower over and pick up the potatoes!

SAVING SEED AND RE PLANTING: If you are going to save part of your harvest for seed, save your medium sized or small ones. Keep them at the temp mentioned above until spring in a paper bag in the dark. It is best to rotate into other raised beds or pots in subsequent years. Don’t plant in the same area year after year.

If you are interested in tasting them, I would recommend that someone cook up some of them (sooner rather than later after harvest - but later is ok, they store very well) so that everyone can see how different they are in cooked appearance and outstanding flavor!  Roasting is by far the best way to get the flavor out of the Makah Ozette (the skin is amazing), but pan frying or even lightly boiled or microwaved will work. By the way, never peel them-just scrub well with a gentle brush! Don’t wash them until you are ready to eat them. Again, just scrub with brush to get dirt off and store in cool, dark place.

If you wanted them for eating, they are in 'eating' stage September through December.  In February when we ship for gardening, they will have lost some of their moisture and firmness and might begin to sprout but are definitely still edible even with sprouts.

Thanks a bunch!

Joann Reckling

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