

IRISH POTATOES

ITEMS OF INTEREST AND PRODUCTION COSTS

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE
POST OFFICE BUILDING, VISALIA
TULARE COUNTY

ITEMS OF INTEREST

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VARIETIES

White Rose is the chief variety grown in Tulare County, with limited acreage of Bliss Triumph and Pontiac. Bliss Triumph and Pontiac have red skins.

SEED

The seed you plant is the most important factor in potato production. Certified seed should be used. Seed treatment is advisable to kill the disease germs carried on the seed piece. Tubers require a rest period after digging before they will sprout readily. Usually about 1500 to 1800 pounds of seed are planted per acre.

PLANTING

The bulk of the spring potatoes in Tulare County are planted between February 10th and March 10th. The fall crop is planted between July 15 and August 10.

The seedpiece should be planted at a depth of about 6 to 8 inches below the top of the bed. Shallow planting increases the chances of sunburn and heat injury.

The soil should contain enough moisture at planting time to germinate the seed and to support its development until the sprouts are well above the surface of the soil. Generally a pre-irrigation is necessary to obtain sufficient moisture.

WHAT WILL IT COST TO GROW EARLY POTATOES IN TULARE COUNTY

Vincent H. Schweers *

Burt Burlingame **

Based upon a gross yield of 300 sacks per acre with 270 sacks marketable
Man labor at \$1.00 per hour, except when indicated otherwise

	Sample Costs		My Costs	
	Per Acre	Per Cwt.	Per Acre	Per Cwt.
<u>Pre-harvest Labor and Material Costs:</u>				
Land preparation: includes pre-irrigation Prep.	\$ 12.00			
Cup and dip seed - 15 sacks @ 60¢	9.00			
Seed cost - 15 sacks @ \$5.50	82.50			
Plant and fertilize: 3 men and tractor	4.00			
Haul seed and fertilizer	1.50			
Fertilizer	37.00			
Shape beds and cultivate	1.75			
Weeding	3.00			
Ditch work and irrig. prep. - 2 men & tractor, 1/2 hr.	1.90			
Irrigation - including pre-irrigation - 12 man hrs.	12.00			
Water-power for 2 1/2 A. ft. - 200 ft. lift @ \$4.50	11.25			
Pest control - application 3X	4.50			
Dust - DDT, etc. - 90 lbs. @ 9¢	8.10			
Miscellaneous labor & materials - gyp., etc.	15.00			
Total Pre-harvest Labor, Field Power and Material	\$203.50	\$.75		
<u>Harvesting Costs:</u>				
Vine removal - rotobearing contract @ 3.00/A	3.00			
Digging - contract	11.00			
Picking - 300 cwt. @ 16¢ (includes contractor)	48.00			
Hauling @ 10¢ cwt. . .	30.00			
Shed costs (incl. field & market sacks) 270 @ 60¢	162.00			
Total Harvesting Cost	\$254.00	\$.94		
<u>Cash Overhead Costs:</u>				
General expense (5% of labor & material costs)	22.88			
County taxes	6.00			
Miscellaneous repairs, insurance, etc.	5.00			
Total Cash Overhead Costs	\$ 33.88	\$.13		
Total Cash, Labor and Field Power Costs	\$491.38	\$1.82		
<u>Depreciation:</u>				
Irrigation facilities (original cost \$200)	15.00			
Crop equip., (except tractor & harvesting)(cost \$36)	4.00			
Total Depreciation	\$ 19.00	.07		
<u>Interest on Investment @ 5%:</u>				
Irrigation facilities on 1/2 original cost - \$100	5.00			
Crop equipment on 1/2 cost - \$18	.90			
Land at \$750	37.50			
Total Interest on Investment	\$ 43.40	.16		
Total Gross Costs of Production	\$553.78	\$2.05		

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Production Costs for Renter Operator
Paying Cash Rent of \$100 per Acre

Total net costs per acre excluding taxes, irrigation facilities, overhead and re- pairs, and interest on land	\$481.28
Cash rent \$100	100.00
Total net cost	\$581.28
Cost per cwt. on 270 sacks market potatoes	\$ 2.15

Costs for renter operator paying 1/5 share of crop	- 54 sacks of market potatoes
Renter's share of market potatoes	- 216 sacks
Landlord pays for his share of inspection and sacks	- About 20¢ per sack
Renter's cost excluding taxes, irrigation facilities, overhead and repairs, interest on land and landlord's in- spection and sack costs	- \$ 77.30
Total net cost for 216 sks.	- 470.48
Total net cost per cwt. market potatoes	- 2.18

IRRIGATION

The soil in the area of the developing tubers should be kept moist until the plants begin to mature. After the plants have emerged, the usual practice is to apply water in alternate furrows on alternate days. A total application of 30 inches of irrigation water for the spring crop and 20 inches for the late crop is recommended.

FERTILIZERS

Heavy applications of fertilizer are needed to produce a good crop of potatoes. Various mixtures are used, as well as simple fertilizers such as ammonium sulfate. In terms of pounds of nutrients, a general recommendation is 100 pounds of ammoniacal nitrogen. The response to phosphorous is quite variable in the county. In the Tipton area phosphorous is quite deficient. Up to 120 pounds of phosphorous can be profitably applied. Potash gave no yield increase. No increase in yield has been received from split applications over a single application at planting time.

CULTIVATION AND WEEDING

After planting but just before the shoots emerge, potato fields are cultivated to destroy the young weeds which may have started. The crust which may have formed is broken and the beds are shaped at the same time.

HARVESTING

Potato harvest in Tulare County is done mostly by contract. Mechanical diggers bring the potatoes to the top of the ground. They are placed in canvas "stub" sacks by hand and hauled to the packing shed where they are washed, graded and sacked.

YIELDS

Average yield in Tulare County is about 250 one hundred pound sacks per acre of marketable potatoes. Many growers produce yields of 300 to 400 sacks per acre.