

County Farm Centre Ltd.

March 2014

Picton

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Crops: (613) 476-9183
Fuel: (613) 476-1613

Foxboro

552 Ashley St.
Store: (613) 962-0769
Fuel: (613) 961-0731

Madoc

278 Lawrence St. W
Store: (613) 473-9040
Fuel: (613)-473-2499

www.countyfarmcentre.com

Agronomy Corner

The Bee Issue

There has been a lot of confusion around neonicotinoids and lubricant usage.

One thing is for certain, neonicotinoids are toxic to bees and so the agricultural industry needs to be proactive to protect the use of the technology as well as the health of the bees, which are vital to agriculture.



Health Canada has published "Pollinator Protection and Responsible Use of Treated Seed – Best Management Practices" found at healthcanada.gc.ca/pollinators

A few key points are:

- Avoid hives, as well as anywhere bees could be foraging when planting treated seed
- If possible exhaust planter dust towards the middle of the field
- Control flowering weeds in the field to prevent bees from foraging there
- Communication between farmers and bee keepers is key

Fluency Agent by Bayer CropScience

Quick Facts

- New seed lubricant replacing talc and graphite
- Do not over apply – 1 unit of fluency agent treats 1 unit of seed (8 gm/seed unit)
- Mix onto the seed
- If a grower needs a lubricant for seed flow purposes for corn or soybeans, Fluency Agent must be used. Talc/graphite is no longer acceptable as a seed flow lubricant. However, graphite can still be used to lubricate planting mechanisms.



Seed Delivery Period

In an effort to spread out our spring workload, we will be offering free delivery of seed and bagged fertilizer prior to April 11, 2014. After April 11, 2014, delivery charges will apply. We will be contacting all seed and bagged fertilizer customers shortly to make delivery arrangements.

Prepare to Maple

County Farm Centre is your maple syrup headquarters. We carry items for all stages of production: tap, filter, boil and bottle.



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All About Potatoes

The potato is a member of the Solanaceae (nightshade) family, which includes tomato, pepper, eggplant, petunia and tobacco.

The enlarged, edible, underground storage portion of the potato plant is called a “tuber”. The tuber develops from underground stems called stolons. Dormant buds (eyes) develop on the tuber. Tuber formation begins when plants are 6 to 8 inches tall, or five to seven weeks after planting, and results from the production and movement of starch into the developing tubers. Many varieties develop fruits and flowers, but these parts are not edible. The fruits look like small green tomatoes and contain the true seed of the potatoes; however they are genetically different from the parent. Plants grown from this seed will not necessarily resemble the original variety. Commercial potato production and home gardeners use tuber pieces containing at least one dormant bud (eye) that will sprout and form a potato plant. These tuber pieces are sometimes referred to as “potato seed” or “seed pieces”. The potato is raised as an annual crop, however, tubers left in the garden that do not completely freeze during the winter, may emerge as volunteer potato plants when the soil warms again.

Seed Preparation

Depending on the source and the quantity you buy you will receive either small tubers or large tubers. Small tubers (1 to 2 inches in diameter) can be planted whole. Cut large tubers into block-shaped, 2 to 2 1/2 ounce seed pieces (about the size of an egg) (Figure 5). The seed pieces should be firm, with at least one “eye” per section and a maximum sprout length of 1/4 to 1/2 inch to ensure optimum germination. seed tubers can be cut and planted on the same day, however allowing the cut surface to heal over for 4-7 days may reduce the risk of seed pieces rotting in the soil.



Soil Preparation and Fertility

Potatoes grow on a wide range of soils, but are best suited to a sandy loam or a soil that is well drained. Very sandy soils may require extra watering to maintain adequate soil moisture. Fine-textured soils that are high in silts and clay may not be well drained, and they tend to produce poorly shaped potatoes.

Do not amend the soil with lime or manure in the same year that potatoes are to be grown. Lime and manure increase the risk of potato scab disease.

Planting and Care

Potatoes are a cool season crop; ideal temperatures for crop growth are 65 to 80 during the day and 55 to 65 at night. The soil should be cultivated 6 to 8 inches deep in the spring, and large soil clods should be broken up or removed before plant-

ing. Plant potatoes when soil temperatures are above 45 F. Cold, wet soil at planting time increases the risk of seed piece decay, and planting into cool, dry soils can cause delayed sprouting and emergence of the potatoes.



Plant tuber seed pieces 3 to 4 inches deep. Leaving 30 to 36 inches between rows and spacing seed pieces 9 to 12 inches apart in the row will generally produce an acceptable yield of medium-sized tubers (Figure 6). Five pounds of seed potatoes should plant 40 feet of row with 12 inches between seed pieces. You can expect to harvest 3 to 5 pounds of potatoes per potato plant. Larger tubers are produced at wider plant spacings, though some varieties, for example, Yukon Gold, develop growth defects such as hollow heart at a wider spacing.

Potato plants should be “hilled” when the plants are 8 to 12 inches tall.

Mound the soil to a height of 3 to 6 inches and approximately 12 to 15 inches from the base of the plant. Use care to prevent damage to the plant roots, which may extend 8 to 12 inches from the base of the plant. Hilling maintains suitable soil cover for tubers as they expand. Tubers that break the soil surface may have green areas that contain bitter tasting glycoalkaloids and should not be eaten. Discard or cut off the green portions.



Avoid planting potatoes in the same location year after year. To lower the risk of disease and insect problems, do not plant in areas where tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, radishes or beets were grown the previous year.

Harvesting

Time of maturity varies for each variety. Indicators of tuber maturity include complete vine death, “skin set” (tuber skin does not peel from the flesh when pressure is applied) and desired tuber size. Mature tubers store better and are less likely to bruise or decay than immature tubers.

New or small tubers can be harvested early without destroying the entire plant by careful digging and removing some of the tubers. The remaining tubers should be left to grow and reach full maturity.

Harvest potatoes before a severe frost. Use a spade or fork to loosen the soil and gently lift the tubers out of the soil (Figure 10). To prevent greening and sunburn damage, do not allow tubers to be exposed to light after harvesting.

