

Planting Potatoes

Potatoes are easy and rewarding to grow. Plant them around Valentine's Day. Once you have purchased seed potatoes (tubers) at the local nursery, simply cut larger potatoes into smaller pieces making sure each piece contains a prominent bud or "eye". Space seed pieces 10 to 12 inches apart in the garden and cover with 3 to 4 inches of soil.

After they sprout add another 3-4 inches of soil. Your crop of potatoes will form between the seed piece and the surface of the soil. If the new potatoes are exposed to sunlight while they are developing, they will turn green. This green portion may be toxic!

You may begin to harvest your potatoes 2 to 3 weeks after the plants have finished flowering by pulling off the tiny "new" potatoes. Continue to harvest as the potatoes mature by gently loosening the soil, reaching under the plant, and removing the largest tubers, leaving the smaller ones to continue growing.

Some gardeners prefer to grow potatoes in straw mulch. Potatoes grown in such a manner are clean and easy to harvest. Cover seed pieces with 1 inch of soil. When green sprouts appear, place 4 to 5 inches of straw around the plants. Keep the layer of straw deep and moist. When potato vines die, harvest potatoes by carefully removing the straw.

Store potatoes in a cool, dry area (like a garage or basement).

Don't grow potatoes in the same soil more than once in three years. Many diseases and insect pests will survive and remain in this area, in spite of your best eradication efforts!

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