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# Potatoes

Potato tubers ('seed potatoes') for planting during 2013 were grown in 2012 and stored over the winter. The growers of seed potatoes are specially careful to rogue out and eliminate diseased plants. Also, seed potatoes have not been treated (like supermarket potatoes) to prevent the eyes from growing.

Cut the seed potatoes into 2-4 pieces, making sure that each piece has 2 eyes. It is best to do this a day or two before planting, so the cut surface can heal over. If the pieces are *too* small the growth will be slow and weak.

**As a guide: a pound of seed potatoes will plant about 10' of row.**

Potatoes like a soil that is loose and drains well, that has good fertility, that has good moisture, and that is a little acidic. To make your soil more acidic, add sulfur to the area before planting. Use 1 or 1.5 lbs per 100 square feet, and work it into the soil. It is best to get a soil test first. The 1 lb rate is a safe rate, usually.

To plant, dig a trench about 4" deep. Plant the pieces 12" apart, with the eyes on the top side. After setting the pieces, bury them (not deeper than 4") and then water.

As the potatoes grow, keep adding some soil to the row. This is called 'hilling the row'. You can hoe it from the walkways toward the row, or add soil from elsewhere in your garden. This will result in the new growing potatoes being deeper and protect them from sunburn.

Potato beetles and some caterpillars like potato leaves. You can pick them off, or use an insecticide. It is most important that you keep looking for them, and deal with them before they destroy your garden.

If you want small summer potatoes dig them in July, a few weeks after the potato plant flowers. Sometimes you can just reach into the row and sneak out a few of the early potatoes—the main plant will keep on growing.

In late August or in September, the leaves will start to yellow. You'll have gotten all the potato growth you will get and it is time to harvest.

Store the harvested potatoes in the dark, spread 1 layer deep and at room temperature for a week or two, so any cuts can heal over. Afterwards they can be stored in a dark cool place, or a refrigerator.

You can grow potatoes in a large pot, or even in a trash can.

- Make sure there is a hole in the bottom, so water can drain out.
- Use good soil—not just garden soil because in a pot this will not drain water properly. Use a potting soil, or a mix of compost + garden soil + peat. The water should drain through and go out the bottom.
- Fill the container about 1/4 with soil, put the potato pieces in eye side up, and add a few more inches of soil. Water well.
- As the plants sprout and grow, keep adding soil. Leave 6-12" of green growth showing. The potato stems and leaves will keep growing upward and the soil level will gradually rise in your pot.
- When the soil is a few inches from the top, just stop adding it and let the plants keep growing.
- When the leaves start to die down in the fall, you can dump the pot and find your potatoes!

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