

# Growing Potatoes

## Where to Plant

Plant potatoes in a sunny spot that hasn't grown tomatoes, eggplant, peppers or other potatoes recently. They're in the same family and it's important to rotate your crops. Potatoes do best in a well drained, light soil that's slightly acidic.

## How to Plant

Plant potatoes in March for a summer crop and as late as July for storage potatoes (if you use an early season potato). There are a couple different ways to grow potatoes, underground or on top of the soil with deep, heavy mulch. If you have heavy, clay soil or poor drainage you should consider growing them on top of the soil. If you have sandy or loamy soil you can do either.

Some people pre-sprout their potatoes by putting them in a cool, dry frost-free place for a month before planting to speed up the growing process. You may want to experiment with this method.

A pound of seed potatoes will produce about 10—25 pounds of potatoes. Generally the more space you give the plants, (up to 3' per plant) and the lighter the soil, the higher yields you'll have. You can use whole seed potatoes or cut them into egg-size chunks (each containing an eye). If you choose to cut them, let the cuts heal in a bright, cool area inside your house for 2 days before planting. This prevents the seed potatoes from rotting in the soil and eliminates the need to treat them with fungicide.

If you want to plant in rows underground, dig a 4" trench. Put the seeds in 18" apart and cover with soil. Rows should be 2' apart. When plants are about 6" tall, mound dirt around them and continue to do this throughout the growing season.

If you want to plant in hills underground, dig a hole, put 3—4 seed potatoes per hill and cover with 4" dirt. Like planting in rows, you continue to mound dirt up for the growing season.

To plant on top of the ground you have several options. Use the same spacing as for rows or hills. If you want to plant in rows cover the seed potatoes with 6" of compost or straw. As the plants grow through this and emerge, simply add on more compost. To plant in hills, put down your seed potatoes and make a hill of compost, continuing to cover them up during the season. You can plant potatoes in your compost pile, in old tires (that you pile one on top of the other and fill with compost as the season advances) and in whiskey barrels. You're only limited by your imagination.

## Care

Occasionally, the newly formed potatoes need to be covered up with dirt or compost as they grow out of the soil. Potatoes need regular watering for a good crop.

When plants flower you can harvest a few new potatoes. After the tops of the plants yellow you can dig potatoes. Leave them in the sun for a few hours to dry before storing them in a cool place for the winter.

