

Grow Potatoes in Your Home Garden!

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Why grow potatoes in your home garden?

- *Growing potatoes produces a bountiful harvest....depending on which variety you choose, 60lbs in just 10 sq ft of garden space!
- *Potatoes come in all different shapes, sizes and colors including purple, red and yellow potatoes!
- *They even make a great garden project for your children or grandchildren.

Are potatoes nutritious?

- *Yes potatoes are nutritious! They are a great source of vitamin C, potassium, fiber and protein, all with no fat! A whole potato has only 100 calories.
- *It's all in how you prepare them. Potatoes are versatile and can be made in a variety of healthy ways. Whether baked, boiled, roasted or fried they are a delicious addition to any meal.

Should you eat the skin?

- *Yes! The skin of the potato contains the majority of the potato's fiber, and many of the nutrients are located close to the skin. Wash the potato thoroughly, cut away green discoloration and/or sprouts, and enjoy your potato with the skin on!

Why don't I see potato seed packets in the store?

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". Dormant buds (eyes) develop on the tuber. 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 the seeds 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".

Let's start planting!

An easy step by step guide to planting potatoes can be found on the backside of this pamphlet. However, a more detailed guide can be found at this website:
<http://migarden.msu.edu/uploads/files/8/growingPotatoes.pdf>



Children love helping in the garden and getting dirty is an added bonus.



Planting and Harvesting of Potatoes in Your Garden

What you need:

- * Seed Potatoes that are certified disease free. You can order them from an on-line nursery or buy them at a local nursery. Don't use potatoes from the grocery store, they are not certified and may have been treated to prevent sprouting.
- * Potatoes grow on a wide range of soils, but are best suited to a sandy loam or a soil that is well drained.
- * To avoid a common scab disease in potatoes, it is not recommended to add manure to the soil. Fertilizer and compost are advised.

How to plant potatoes:

Seed potatoes can be planted whole if they are small. Large seed tubers can be cut into block-shaped, 2 to 2 1/2 ounce seed pieces. The seed pieces should have at least one "eye". Let cut seed air out for a day or two so the cut areas dry slightly before planting.

1. Plant potatoes in full sun.
2. Plant potatoes in rows that are 30-36" apart.
3. The seed potatoes are planted 4" under the soil.
4. Plant the potatoes 9" - 12" apart from each other.
5. When the plants are 8"-12" tall they should be "hilled" to protect the tubers from being exposed to the sun. Mound the soil about 6" to cover the base of the plant. When the tubers are exposed to sun, the potatoes turn green and should not be eaten.
6. In general, 1 inch of water per week, from rainfall or irrigation, is needed on well drained soil.



Plant seed pieces 4 inches deep and space 9 to 12 inches apart.

When to plant potatoes:

- * Plant seed pieces in spring when the soil temp. is 45F or above.

When to harvest potatoes:

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

Storage of potatoes:

- * Store only the healthy potatoes that are reasonably free from soil.
- * Store in a paper or mesh bag in a dark, cool place (not lower than 40F).