Andy's Seed Potato Guide

How To Plant, Harvest and Store Seed Potatoes

Yield
 A good yield of potatoes will be 50-75 pounds of usable tubers from 100 feet of row.

Soil Requirements
A well-drained fine, sandy, loam soil high in organic matter, is preferred.

Seedbed Preparation
After tilling or plowing, level surface slightly so that furrows can be made.
Some gardeners will wait a day or so after plowing before planting the seed pieces.

Soil pH and Fertilizer Products
Liberal amounts of fertilizer are required for large yields of potatoes. Ideally, the fertilizer should be placed in continuous bands of 2 to 3 inches to each side and slightly below the seed piece. However, most gardeners will broadcast the fertilizer before plowing or spading.
A typical rate would be 25 to 30 pounds of 8-16-16, 10-20-20, or equivalent per 1,000 square feet. When plants are 4 to 6 inches tall, band 2 to 3 pounds of fertilizer per 100 feet of row about 6 to 10 inches from the row if growth is not satisfactory and if foliage is yellowish-green.

Planting
Plant the seed 3 ½ to 4 ½ inches deep in shallow trenches and cover with an inch or two of soil. The seed pieces should be spaced 9 to 12 inches apart in rows 28 to 34 inches apart. Nine to 12 pounds of seed will be needed for each 100 feet of row when 1 ½ to 2 ounces seed pieces are planted 12 inches apart.

Cultivation and Weed Control
Due to the small area involved and the number of the crops being grown in the garden, chemical weed control is not suggested. Cultivation should be shallow and frequent enough to control weeds. Avoid deep cultivation which cuts potato roots and slows growth. When plants are 6 to 8 inches tall, some soil should be moved toward the row to start forming a ridge. By the time the plants are 15 to 18 inches tall, the ridge should be 4 to 5 inches high. Ridging is
 necessary to prevent greening of shallow tubers.

*Making the world beautiful
one flower at a time.*

Insect and Disease Control
Most lawn and garden stores sell approved insecticide-fungicide combinations for use on potatoes. A prevention program of spraying or dusting can start as soon as the plants emerge and continue until late summer or a few weeks before harvest. Flea beetles, leaf hoppers, aphids and Colorado potato beetles are the major insects affecting leaves and stems. Early blight and late blight are the major foliage diseases.

Harvesting and Storage
For highest yields and best storage, potatoes should not be dug until two weeks after vines are dead. This allows the skins to set or thicken and reduces skin peeling, bruising and rot in storage. When harvesting at temperatures above 80 degrees F, potatoes should be picked up immediately and put in a dark place. Potatoes exposed to sunshine (high temperatures) will turn green and may rot. To store potatoes for several months, the tubers should be cured in a dark place at 60 to 65 degrees F and humidity of 85% or higher for 10 days. After the tubers are cured or healed, keep them in a cool (40 to 45 degree F), dark place with high humidity.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What causes some potatoes to have a hollow center and black crust? What is this?
A: This is called "Hollow Heart," which is caused by a sudden change in the growth rate of the potato. This can happen if the potato plant suffers from the lack of water during the growing season then receives too much water all at once. Irrigation and the constant diligence of farmers limit this from happening.

Q: Are potatoes nutritious?
A: Yes! Potatoes are a low calorie, fat and cholesterol free vegetable high in vitamin C, potassium and a good source of vitamin B6 and dietary fiber.

Q: Is it safe to eat the potato skin?
A: Absolutely! In fact, we recommend it. The skin of a 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.

Q: Is it safe to eat raw potatoes?
A: Yes. Some consider raw potatoes a nice treat.