

## HOW TO GROW POTATOES !

### When to Plant

Potatoes can be planted quite early in the spring. Plant up to 10 days before the last heavy frost date in the spring.

### Location/Soil

Try to choose a location in the garden that did NOT have potatoes, tomatoes, eggplant or peppers growing in the previous 1-2 years.

### Planting & Growing Information

Plant either whole or cut tubers. If cutting the tubers make sure to have 2-3 eyes on each section and allow 24 hours after cutting the tubers so they can callous over prior to planting.

Plant every 30 cm (12") in rows spaced 30 cm (12") apart. Cover with 2.5-5 cm (1-2") of soil.

### Other Information

Potatoes will benefit from having compost or well-rotten manure worked into the planting area. Do not use fresh manure as it can encourage the disease "potato scab".

Planting with whole tubers reduces the chances of rotting.

Tubers that are kept in a warm location (15°C / 60°F) prior to planting will appear in the garden sooner.

When plants are 15-20 cm (6-8") tall, hoe up to 10 cm (4") of soil between the rows to create hills. This helps to preserve moisture and ensure the potato tubers are not exposed to sunlight which can cause green on the potatoes making them inedible.

Water regularly for better yields and plant growth.

Potato plants can produce small green fruits that resemble tomatoes – they are small seed balls which are the fruits that contain the true seeds. They are not edible.

### Harvesting & Storage

You don't want to harvest all of the potatoes at once. You will want to leave some potatoes to grow and be harvested later. Harvesting can begin once they are big enough to eat. Small potatoes will be present around the time of flowering or shortly after.

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Generally 1-2 weeks after blossoms appear is when some harvesting can begin. To check, simply remove some of the soil away from the hill and pull away some tubers away from the roots. The plant won't be harmed and can still produce potatoes until ready to lift the plant entirely.

To harvest potatoes, you will want to dig under the plants with either your shovel or your spading fork being careful not to damage the potatoes in the digging process. Once underneath the plant with your shovel or spading fork, lift the entire plant and shake the soil off of it and pull the potatoes you want from the vine.

For fall storage, wait for a couple of weeks after the vines have died (often from a frost) which will allow the skins to toughen up or "set" so they can be stored longer.

Allow harvested potatoes to dry/cure in a dark area prior to storage.

Note: It is best to plant each year's crop with new certified seed to help avoid potential problems.

### Potato Beetles

Potato bugs/beetles are a voracious and destructive garden pest. They have very efficient chewing mouthparts equipped with sharp cutting edges. If left unchecked they can decimate crops in a very short time, sometimes leaving behind nothing but stripped plant stalks.

Potato beetles can build a resistance to most sprays so other methods of control are often more effective:

Clean up garden or field debris so the potato bugs have inadequate shelter to over-winter.

- Do not plant potatoes in the same spot each year – crop rotation is a must!
- Hand picking may sound unpleasant but it can work quite well. It's one of the most efficient and least harmful ways to control potato beetles. Simply pick them off the plant and put in an old soup can that has some soap based insecticide or even kerosene in it to kill them.
- There are different chemical applications that can be found in garden centers – talk to a professional where purchasing these products so you are completely informed on the product and any risks.

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**Source:**

McKenzie Seeds ([www.mckenzieseeds.com](http://www.mckenzieseeds.com)), a longtime supporter of Plant • Grow • Share a Row

**Articles from Harrowsmith:**

[www.harrowsmithmag.com/2203/canadas-best-potato-leek-soup](http://www.harrowsmithmag.com/2203/canadas-best-potato-leek-soup)

**Links:**

[www.tvoo.org/article/the-hunt-for-the-perfect-potato](http://www.tvoo.org/article/the-hunt-for-the-perfect-potato)



As part of your garden this year, plant and grow an extra row of your favourite veggies and donate the harvest to your local food bank. Help us help all those in need.

**Special thanks to McKenzie Seeds for their great growing information and their long-time support for Plant • Grow • Share A Row**