



POTATO

Solanum

Easily grown and abundantly productive, potatoes are one of the most generous vegetables you can grow! Two pounds of seed potatoes can yield fifty pounds of potatoes for eating. Use 1 lb. of cut up seed pieces for an 8-10' row, spaced 1' apart.

PREPARING SEED POTATOES

Tubers the size of eggs are highly desirable and should be planted whole. Large tubers should be cut up into pieces weighing about 2 ounces, and containing two or more eyes. Use a clean, sharp knife to cut seed pieces the day before planting. Once cut, they must be planted the next day.

PLANTING

Plant when soil temperatures are between 55° to 70°F, generally between mid-March and the end of May in Portland. Plant seed potatoes 4-6" deep, 12" apart, in rows 12-24" apart. If the soil is heavy, plant 2" deep and cover with 2" of mulch.

CULTURE

Full sun is important. Nutrients are mostly pulled up from below the planted tuber, but 90% of potatoes will form above the planted tuber. Therefore, heavy clay soil below the planted tuber is fine, but the soil used for hilling should be much lighter (see Hilling). Potatoes need regular water to produce a good yield, and dry soil once the plants start to turn yellow.

HILLING

Hilling is crucial to getting a good yield. Sprouts will emerge in about 2 weeks from planting. When the stems are about 8" high, gently hill up around the vines until only 4" are exposed using soil from both sides of the row, compost, or any other light but moisture retentive material. Repeat the hilling process every time the vines reach 8" tall until you are out of soil to hill up or space to make hills. Later maturing varieties yield more and benefit more from hilling.

FERTILIZING

Fertilize after emergence and until blooming ends. Use any balanced fertilizer such as EB Stone Tomato & Vegetable.

HARVESTING & PRUNING

Breaking or cutting off vines when tubers are mature is the best method. Leave potatoes in the hill for about 2 weeks after vines have died down. This allows time for skins to "set", which increases storage ability.

STORAGE

Potatoes keep best in the dark at 36° to 40°F, with enough humidity so they don't dry out, and given enough air circulation so they can respire. Light or warmth promote sprouting and will turn potatoes green. But cold potatoes bruise easily so handle them gently in storage.

DON'T PLANT POTATOES FROM THE GROCERY STORE

Supermarket potatoes are almost always treated with a sprouting inhibitor which retards shoot growth, resulting in a low yield. All potatoes have a virus which builds up over generations and decreases yield. Seed potatoes are grown in areas where the virus is weakest, so only seed potatoes should be planted.