



Seed Savers EXCHANGE

How to Grow Potatoes (*Solanum tuberosum*)

This versatile crop arrived in America centuries ago and today ranks as the most popular vegetable in the United States. Cool-season vegetables, potatoes come in a great range of shapes, sizes, colors, and textures and are grown from small tubers known as “seed potatoes.”

Time of Planting: Sow potatoes outdoors 2-3 weeks after your last frost.

Spacing Requirements: Tubers should be planted at a depth of 6 to 8 inches and between 1 and 2 feet apart. Rows should be spaced 3 feet apart. Plant each piece of potato cut side down, with the eyes pointing up.

Time to Germination: Germination typically occurs between 14 and 28 days.

Special Considerations: Plant tubers in light, loose, and well-drained soil in full sun. Potatoes can tolerate a light frost; however, they will need protection if a hard, late-season freeze occurs. Keep potato vines watered—about one to two inches of water or rain per week—throughout the summer, especially during the period when the plants are flowering and immediately following the flowering stage. When the foliage turns yellow and begins to die back, discontinue watering.

Common Pests and Diseases (and how to manage): Potatoes are very susceptible to viruses. Always choose a planting site with good airflow and leave the recommended space between plants. Potatoes should be rotated in the garden, never being grown in the same spot until there has been a 3 to 4-year absence of the crop. Crop rotation will help to prevent a buildup of disease, and will avoid infected plants springing up undetected from potato tubers that were missed during a previous year’s harvest.

Harvest (when and how): Harvest baby potatoes 2 to 3 weeks after the plants have finished flowering. Gently dig around the plants to remove potatoes for fresh eating, being careful not to be too intrusive. Remove the biggest new potatoes and leave the smaller ones in place so they can continue to grow.

Eating: A culinary staple, potatoes can be boiled, mashed, sautéed, fried, and cooked au gratin.

Storing: Store potatoes in a well-ventilated, dark, and cool area in temperatures between 35 and 40 degrees F. Some varieties keep better than others, with varieties like Carola and Russets being exceptional keepers.

For more seed saving and gardening tips, visit:

Seed Savers Exchange

seedsavers.org

A nonprofit dedicated to saving and preserving heirloom seeds.

© 2017

seedsavers.org/learn