

Planting Potatoes

You can plant your potatoes anytime in February. It's good to buy your seed potatoes in late January though, because they tend to sell out quickly.

- **Seed potatoes should have some eyes already sprouting on them.** If they don't set in a warm place in your home for a few days until sprouts start to grow.
- If you've purchased large seed potatoes, say maybe fist size, or you just want to increase the number you have, **you can cut and cure your seed potatoes.**
 1. Cut your seed potato into 2 or 3 sections, large enough so that each has 2 or 3 "eyes" (sprouts) per section.
 2. Then cure. Lay them out on a paper and let dry (cure) for about 3 or 4 days.
 3. Next, dust with dusting sulfur and plant.
- If you've purchased seed potatoes of a **smaller variety**, or the seed potatoes are just smaller (say new potato size, or fingerling potatoes) **you don't have to cut them and cure them.** You can plant them whole, unless you just want more. You'll **still want to dust whole seed potatoes with sulfur** before you plant them.
- **Now...PLANT!**
 1. **Dig a trough about 6-8" deep, and about 4" wide.**
 2. If you're planting in a container, only fill the container 1/3 full with your soil mix.
 3. **Plant the seed potatoes about 12" apart.** If you want **bigger potatoes plant about 15" apart.** If you just want to harvest **baby potatoes** in early summer, **plant them as close as 4" apart.**
- In the trough, **cover the seed potatoes with about 3"-4"** of your existing **soil mix**, mixed with some **pine straw**, so that it's loose and aerated around the seed potatoes. You can keep a pile of the compost/soil you've dug out for the trough right next to it. You can use a bit of it and pine straw to back fill every each time you need to.
- **Sprouts will usually start to emerge in a couple of weeks.**
 - Let the stems get about **8" tall, then back fill around them with another 3-4" inches of soil/pine straw mix.** You'll probably need to do this "hilling" one more time 2 or 3 weeks later, then thereafter, only add about an inch or two around the stems each week as they continue to grow.
 - **Your potatoes will form in the space between the seed potato and the surface of the soil.** So you need enough room for them to form, and a light enough mixture so it's not too heavily compacted.
- **If you're using a container**, follow the same procedure, filling up the container as the stems grow.
- **Moisture management is key to potato success in our area.** They are susceptible to a number of soil-borne fungal problems. Do not let stand soggy wet soil. Water them early in the day so moisture does not sit on the foliage over night. If you see spots on the leaves forming, treat with an organic fungicide immediately and follow up several times at 7-10 day intervals.
- **When the plants are flowering, that is when they are forming potatoes.** If weather has warmed up and dried out by that time, make sure to provide adequate supplemental watering.
- If you want to **harvest baby potatoes** from just underneath the soil, you can start doing that about **2-3 weeks after the plants start flowering.** If you want **larger potatoes** in the fall, harvest about **2-3 weeks after the foliage has died down in late fall.**

Don't forget to plant rosemary, thyme and sage to roast or mash with your potatoes!