

URBAN FARMER

LOVE THE EARTH

From Seed to Harvest: A beginner's guide to growing seed potatoes

Potatoes are an excellent carb source and culinary staple that can be added to roasts, stews or as an addition to a meal. They come in various colors and shapes, such as the traditional Yukon gold to purple fingerling potatoes. Potatoes can be grown from true seed or seed potatoes, which are pieces of a cut-up potato.

What potatoes to use for seed potatoes?

Although potatoes purchased from the grocery store will sprout and go to seed, it is best to buy the seed potatoes from a certified grower, as starting with quality seed potatoes will best ensure a good crop of potatoes. Also, sometimes potatoes purchased from a supermarket are treated with growth retardant or contain harmful pathogens that can harm the growth of a new plant. Seed potatoes should be clear of blemishes or brown spots, and the skin should not be split or bumpy.

How to cut seed potatoes:

Seed potatoes should have at least one or two sprouts, or eyes, on them, and larger potatoes with three or more sprouts can be cut in half. Cut seed potatoes in 1-inch pieces. Once the seed potatoes have been cut, give them enough time to callous, generally 10 to 14 days. If the seed potatoes haven't healed prior to planting, the wetness of spring can cause them to rot. To quicken the healing process of freshly cut seed potatoes, you can apply sulfur to the flesh. Sprinkle the sulfur onto the cut potatoes and lay the potatoes out in a single layer in a warm, humid location to dry for a few days. Most often, a paper bag



[Seed potatoes available at ufseeds.com](http://ufseeds.com)

is used to hold the potatoes with the top of the bag then folded over.

Fingerling potatoes are often planted whole, as seed potatoes do not need to be cut if they have only one or two eyes.

(For more information on how to cut seed potatoes, see diagram on the next page.)

How much seed potato do I need?

Seed potatoes can be planted for two purposes – to be grown and harvested as adult potatoes or to be harvested when they are young for new potatoes. To determine how much seed potato you need to plant, measure the length of the rows you plan to plant the seed potatoes in. If planting multiple rows, add the lengths together. Divide that final number by 10 to determine the amount of seed potatoes you will need in pounds. On average, 1 pound of seed potatoes plants 10 feet of potatoes. If planning to harvest the potatoes when



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they are young, increase the amount of seed potatoes to 1 ½ pounds per 10 feet.

To plant:

Seed potatoes can be planted up to four weeks before the last frost date. Plant with the eye facing up in a trench dug about 4 inches deep. Space the potatoes 10-12 inches apart.

To grow:

Potatoes like acidic soil with a pH of 5.2. Once plants reach 6 inches tall but before they begin to flower, gardeners should start the hilling process. This helps prevent potato sunburn, which creates a chemical called solanine that turns the potato green. Solanine is toxic, so do not eat green potatoes. Hilling the soil up around the base of the plant prevents sunburn. Hilling covers the root and also adds support to the plant. This process needs to be done every few weeks throughout the potato's growing season.

To harvest:

Potatoes are ready to harvest when the foliage begins to die back. Once this happens, cut the brown foliage off and leave

the potatoes for 10 to 14 more days. Dig up the potatoes on a dry day but handle them gently as they bruise easily. Once harvested, store the potatoes in a cool, dark place for two weeks to allow for the skin to cure. Curing the skin allows for the potatoes to keep longer. Once cured, do not store potatoes near apples, as the apples make the potatoes go bad.

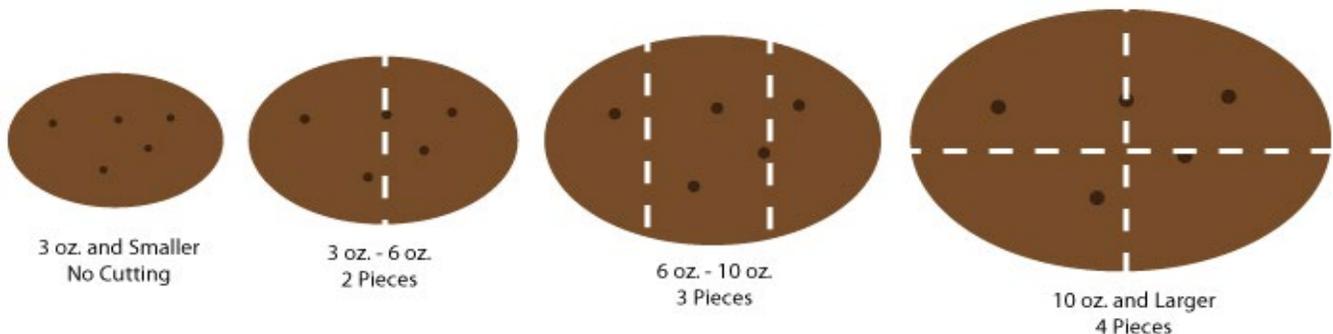
What potatoes crave:

Potatoes crave nitrogen and phosphorous. Prior to planting, non-organic gardeners can use a standard 15-15-15 fertilizer and work it into the soil's surface. To aid in potato growth, side dress freshly sprouted seeds with a mix of cottonseed meal, bone meal and greenmeal to increase the soil's acidity. You can also add in kelp meal.

During the growing season, feed the plants with fish emulsion or kelp extract every two weeks until the plants bloom. Then, six weeks after planting, side dress the potatoes with the same fertilizer mix used at planting but only half as much.

Where to buy seed potatoes:

Urban Farmer sells many different kinds of seed potatoes on our website at [ufseeds.com!](http://ufseeds.com)



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