

Planting Time

Wait for the soil to warm up to at least 50F, which is usually early-mid May in Montana.

Planting Location

Choose a sunny spot for your spuds and avoid planting them in the same location year after year. To lower the risk of disease and insect problems, do not plant in areas where tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, radishes, or beets were grown the previous year.

Ground Prep

Potatoes grow on a wide range of soils but are best suited to a soil that is well drained. Till the soil as deeply as possible to encourage good drainage. Dig a trench approximately 6" deep and place seed pieces in bottom of trench 8-12" apart. Cover seed pieces with 4" of soil. As the potatoes emerge, fill in the rest of the trench.

Do not amend the soil with lime or manure in the same year that potatoes are to be grown, as they both increase the risk of scab.

Potato Prep

Potatoes are grown from tubers, called "seed potatoes", instead of a true seed. Smaller tubers can be left whole, and larger ones can be cut into pieces 1-1.5". Make sure each piece has a couple eyes, which is where the new plant will grow from. Leave the cut pieces out for a couple days to form a protective layer before planting.

Harvesting

You should be able to harvest "new potatoes" after ~60-70 days. Dig around the edges of the plant with a fork and see if you can rob a few tubers to determine size. You can dig anytime they are large enough for your use. If you plan on taking the potatoes to maturity and storing them over the winter, reduce water in late summer and let the vines die back naturally or cut them. After the vines have been dead 2-3 weeks, often after the first frost, dig potatoes and remove as much of the dirt as possible.

Time of maturity varies for each variety. Indicators of tuber maturity include complete vine death, "skin set" (tuber skin does not peel from the flesh when pressure is applied) and desired tuber size. Mature tubers store better and are less likely to bruise or decay than immature tubers.

Storing

For two to three weeks after harvest, store tubers in the dark at 55 to 60°F with high relative humidity to heal bruised and damaged areas that could provide entrance for disease organisms.

Use any damaged potatoes first, and do not try to store them with the others.

Store in a cool dark place (not in a refrigerator) for up to six months. Remove any green spots or sprouts before consuming stored tubers.

POTATO GROWING GUIDE

Tips on spuds from your
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3225 Cooney Dr
Helena, MT 59602

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Spacing

Plant the cut side of the tuber down. If you want larger potatoes use 12" spacing. If you want smaller potatoes or plan to harvest early, 8" is sufficient.

How many seed potatoes do I need?

1lb for 5-8 row feet
2.5lbs per 12-15 row feet
5lbs per 25 row feet
20lbs per 100 row feet

Hilling

Hilling maintains suitable soil cover for tubers as they expand, while also protecting them from the sun and preventing greening. When the stems are 8" high, gently hill with soil brought from both sides. Hill two more times at two-week intervals.

Fertilizing

When hilling the second time add compost or granular fertilizer. Manure can be used but can contribute to a disease called scab.

Watering

Potatoes are very sensitive to soil moisture and do best with a consistent soil moisture level, which can also help prevent scab. Avoid overwatering. In general, 1 inch of water per week from rainfall or irrigation is adequate. As much as 2 inches per week may be required on sandy soils with low organic matter.

Early Season Varieties

Norland Dark Red: Tubers are medium oblong, slightly flattened, with smooth red skin, shallow eyes, and white flesh. Very good for boiling, frying and salads and often harvested for "new" potatoes in mid-summer. Best eaten fresh as they do not store as well as some others. Easy to grow; resistant to scab, early blight, and hollow heart.

Purple Majesty: A real beauty of a potato with deep, thick, dark purple skins and purple flesh all the way through. Good for frying, baking, or boiling and have a delightful buttery texture. They don't store well, so be ready to eat a lot of purple deliciousness when harvest time comes around. Resistant to most viruses.

Yukon Gold: Tubers are oval, slightly flattened with finely flaked yellowish white skin. An extremely popular, yellow-fleshed potato suitable for any and all cooking styles. Delicious and stores well, there's a reason this spud is so sought after. Resistant to Potato Virus A, and moderately resistant to leaf roll.

Mid Season Varieties

Chieftain: A high yielding variety that will produce round/oval-shaped, red tubers with shallow or medium-depth eyes and white flesh. Excellent for boiling and roasting and stores well. Resistant to scab, tuber net necrosis, and late blight.

Sangre: Sangre is a medium-maturing red, smooth skinned potato. Plants are slow to emerge but produce a nice crop of round tubers. Creamy white flesh is great for boiling or baking. One of the best storing red varieties. Resistant to hollow heart and moderately resistant to scab, leafroll, and hollow heart.

Yukon Gem: An excellent yellow fleshed all-purpose potato. Tubers are similar in appearance to 'Yukon Gold', but with higher yield potential. Buttery texture is excellent, especially when prepared by baking, boiling or frying. Resistant to scab, moderately resistant to late blight and hollow heart.

Late Season Varieties

Russet Burbank: The most widely grown all-purpose potato in the United States. This heirloom produces tubers that are long, cylindrical with tan skin and a creamy, white flesh. Excellent for baking, frying and mashing. Large, dependable yields take longer to mature but you can enjoy them all winter long as they store so well. Resistant to scab.

Clearwater Russet: The oblong tubers of this multi-use potato have medium-russet skin and creamy white flesh. Tubers are very smooth and have a higher protein content than most other varieties. High yielding and stores well. Moderately resistant to scab.

French Fingerlings: A popular gourmet variety which produces large, plump fingerling tubers with smooth, dark rose-red skin and waxy, yellow flesh lightly splashed with pink. This outstanding potato variety offers an exceptional quality and delicious nutty flavor all its own. Best flavor if boiled or roasted. Resistant to scab.

German Butterball: Superb all-purpose potato. Tubers are yellow fleshed, oval and smooth to slightly flaky with a yellow skin color. Eyes are shallow and well distributed. Great for frying, baking, mashing and soups. Plan on using these all winter because they are excellent for storing. Resistant to scab and viruses.