



Potatoes

Potato Types

Russets are your typical baking potato. They are also excellent for mashing and frying. They have dry, flaky white flesh. Their skins are fairly thick which makes them better for storing.

Red Potatoes are considered to be boiling or salad potatoes, though they are also great mashed. Their skin is red in color and their flesh is white and moist. They don't store as well as russets.

Cobblers are thin-skinned white potatoes. These are all purpose potatoes that lend themselves to frying and mashing. Being thin-skinned, they are not as good a keeper as russets.

Soil Preparation

Potatoes need abundant soil oxygen and do not thrive in tightly packed soils. If your garden has heavy soil, take the time to amend it. Add well decomposed organic matter such as peat moss, barkmulch, compost, or manure to lighten up the soil's texture. It is also beneficial to add a complete fertilizer containing nitrogen, phosphorus and potash. **Bookcliff Gardens Choice Vegetable Garden Fertilizer** is an excellent fertilizer. Thoroughly mix it in before planting, following label directions.



Planting

Plant your seed pieces sometime during March and April. Seed pieces should be cut to the size of a medium egg. There should be at least two eyes on each piece. If you like, you can dust the seed pieces with Captan fungicide. This usually isn't necessary if the soil temperature is at least 50 degrees and moist. Allow cut faces of pieces to dry over night before planting. Plant your seed pieces with the eye facing up, 3" to 4" deep and about 12 inches apart if planted in rows. If planted in separate hills, leave 2 1/2 to 3 feet between each plant. Potatoes actually grow off of the plant stem, not on the roots. When plants are 3 to 4 inches high, gradually start hilling up some light garden soil around the growing stems. Continue to do this to a total depth of 8 to 10 inches. Potatoes enjoy cool roots. Mulch with 2"-4" of loose organic material like bark chips, cedar mulch, or straw.

Watering

Proper watering is one of the most important factors when tending to your potatoes. From the time of planting to full tuber maturity, maintain uniform soil moisture. Keep the soil moist, not soggy. Do not allow the foliage to wilt. Dry soil will result in misshapen, split or hollow tubers. As the tubers reach maturity, they will require less water.

Pest Control

Inspect your plants frequently for pests. There are a variety of insects and diseases which attack potatoes. If you're not sure about what kind of pest may be attacking your plants, bring in a sample of a bug and a leaf to us at Bookcliff Gardens. We can help direct you to the proper form of control. Tend to your weeds early on in the season so they don't become invasive. Avoid extensive hoeing or cultivating within 6 inches of the plants because feeder root damage can occur, or you can scar the developing potatoes.

Harvesting

If you enjoy new potatoes, dig some as soon as the tops flower. Leave the rest for harvest when they completely mature. If you will be storing your potatoes for winter, leave them in the ground for about two weeks after the vines have died down before digging. Dig your potatoes when the air temperature is above 45° and the soil is not wet. Avoid bruising the potatoes when digging them. Place your potatoes in a slatted crate or basket and cover with bags or newspapers to keep out the light. Place them in the dark for a week at about 70 degrees to condition the skins. Then store them at 38 to 45 degrees and keep the humidity high.

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