

Growing Potatoes in Florida

Potatoes are delicious and a great side dish for any meal. Follow these steps for growing great potatoes right in your backyard. In a few short months, you'll be harvesting yummy potatoes.

1. Cut Potatoes into Seed Pieces - Seed potatoes come as whole potatoes. To plant, they first need to be cut into seed pieces about the size of an egg, with at least two eyes per piece. Small potatoes can be planted whole. After cutting, leave in a warm dry place for a day or two to let the cuts dry. Before planting, you may want to dust the seed pieces with Captan fungicide to help prevent disease.

2. Plant Potatoes - Plant potatoes in a well drained soil mixture at a depth of about 4 inches, with the eyes pointing upwards. We like to add vermiculite or perlite to our soil mixture to make it nice and light. Space potatoes about 2 feet apart. Water potatoes every other day at first, making sure that they never sit wet. Adjust watering as plants grow. Fertilize monthly with Kerby's 8-4-8 to encourage good growth.

3. Hilling - This is an important step for maximizing harvests. As potato plants grow mound soil up around the base of the plants. This will encourage more roots to grow which leads to more potatoes. There are some cool methods for growing potatoes in old tires that really let you pile up the dirt and get lots of potatoes from just one plant. Typically the average plant will have 6 - 10 potatoes. Be sure to cover any tubers that come to the surface.

4. Harvesting - Red potatoes will harvest in 80 to 100 days. To harvest potatoes that will store well, you'll want to let the tubers mature. Once plants have grown and flowered, they will die off. At this point, cover the potato plants with plastic to allow soil to dry. Leave them in the ground for two weeks. Harvest by carefully digging the tubers up, but avoid damaging them. Wash lightly and dry completely before storing. Any tubers which are small and green should be discarded. Potatoes store in a cool, dry place for months, so you can enjoy them well into the summer.

