

Your success will be in direct proportion to your persistence. To control on a scale of 300 row feet or more we suggest:

- 1) The microbial insecticide "Entrust" (Dow Agrosciences (800) 892-6740),
- 2) The parasitic fungus, *Beauveria bassiana*, product name "Naturalis-L" (Troy Biosciences (800) 448-2843).



## Organic Potato Growing Guide<sup>©</sup>

### Greensprouting and Warming Seed

Greensprouting is an optional seed potato conditioning procedure you may want to try. We greensprout our entire crop. Begin greensprouting (or chitting) about four weeks before expected planting date. Warm uncut tubers at 65°-70° F in the dark for about a week. Expose to light as soon as sprouts appear and lower temperature to 50° F. Light will turn the sprouts green and keep them short and stocky. Greensprouting reduces 10-14 days from field growing time and is highly recommended for market gardeners. **Short of greensprouting, simple seed warming (70° F for 48-72 hours prior to planting) improves germination rate and yield. Warming seed is far superior to planting cold seed.**

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**G**rowing potatoes is simple. Plant seed pieces 2" deep, 12" apart in a row, and 30-36" between rows after soil temperature reaches 50° F. Fertilize and water well and be sure to mound up soil around base of plant (but do NOT bury any leaves) to protect the developing tubers. Advanced and market gardeners may benefit from some of the additional details described below.

### Upon Arrival

Open the package and inspect the potatoes for shipping damage. If it will be more than two weeks before you can plant, remove the tubers from their paper sacks (which over time tend to wick away moisture) and store in a cool place (40°-50° F). It may take a week or longer for sprouts to emerge from the 'eyes'. If sprouts are already visible, place the tubers in the light: this will green up the sprouts and hasten their readiness for planting. Protect tubers from freezing temperatures, and also from high temperatures, which cause water loss and shriveling.

### Preparing the Soil

Work into the soil a generous amount of good compost or composted manure. Potatoes appreciate fertile soil. Dedicating yourself to increasing your soil's organic matter will pay rich dividends over the long run. Healthy soil grows healthy plants, which provide healthy crops. This is a basic tenet of organic agriculture.

## Wood Prairie Potato Helpline

(207) 425-7741 M-F 8:15-5:00 EST



CERTIFICATION NO. 821

**Note to Certified Organic Farmers:** Approval for the use of crop inputs rests with your specific certifying organization. Always check with your certifier before using any new material!

## Cutting Seed

We prefer seed pieces that weigh  $1\frac{1}{2}$  ounces ( $\frac{3}{4}$  - 1 ounce for Fingerlings) and have no less than two eyes/sprouts per piece. A seed potato the size of a large hen's egg weighs  $2\frac{1}{2}$  ounces - you'd cut that in half. Seed potatoes smaller than that may be planted whole. Medium and large seed should be cut into blocky pieces - usually 2, 3, or 4 pieces per tuber. Our organic Maine Certified Seed comes to you untreated. To minimize risk of seed piece rot you may dust the cut surface with calcitic or dolomitic agricultural lime, or sulfur, though this is not essential (we don't). Some folks cut seed as they plant (we do). Others cut a few days ahead and let the cut surface callous over.

## Planting

Avoid planting potatoes too early in cold, wet soil. Moderation is the course of choice in organic agriculture. Let the soil warm to  $50^{\circ}$  F. Never plant in soil below  $45^{\circ}$  F. Plant warmed up seed after risk of hard frost has passed. Generally, space seed pieces 12" apart. Varieties with a heavy set (number of tubers per hill) like the Butte russets or the Fingerlings can be spaced 15" - 18" apart in row to allow each tuber to fully size up. To hasten germination place seed, eyes up, 1" to 3" deep. (Shallower in the cool North, deeper in the hot South). Plants normally take 3 weeks to sprout up through the ground.

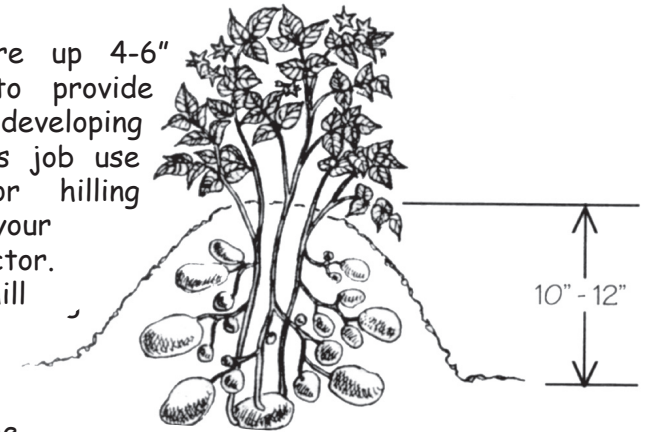
## Foliar Nutrients

For healthy plants we like to spray on plant leaves 4 to 6 times per season.

- Soluble seaweed powder (Acadian Seaplants extract available from Fertrell Co., PA (800) 347-1566),
- Liquid Fish (Neptune's Harvest, MA (800) 259-4769),
- You might also consider compost tea made from properly made compost and Foliar minerals - especially Calcium, Phosphorus and Boron - as determined by soil or leaf analysis.

## Hilling

Once plants are up 4-6" began hilling to provide cover for the developing tubers. For this job use a hand-hoe or hilling attachment for your rototiller or tractor. Build a nice big hill as the season progresses, mounding up soil from between the rows. Successful hilling covers the tubers and prevents them from becoming green and bitter. Use care to avoid covering leaves. An alternative is to apply a heavy straw mulch.



## Harvest and Storage

Potatoes may be eaten any time after tubers start to develop. Tubers appear around potato blossoming time (although potatoes do not need to bloom to yield well). No need to pull up the whole plant for summer potatoes: just gently paw into the side of the hill and remove the tubers that have sized up leaving the rest to grow larger. Make sure the remaining tubers are re-covered by soil. If you are going to store them, harvest when fully mature, at least 14 days after the vines have withered dead and the potato skins have thickened. Store simply in bins, wood crates, or burlap or mesh bags. Ideal storage is earth like: dark, moist,  $38^{\circ}$ - $40^{\circ}$  F.

## Pests

The first rule of organic agriculture is strict rotation of crops. Avoid planting potatoes in a spot where potatoes or other nightshades (tomatoes, peppers, eggplant) have grown in the last 3 - 4 years. Identify your garden's bugs to learn which are the beneficials and which are the troublemakers. (We suggest Rodale's Color Handbook of Garden Insects by Anna Carr, Rodale Press, Emmaus, PA 18098). The Colorado Potato Beetle, king of troublemakers on a home garden scale, can best be controlled by your regular and persistent efforts. With your fingers crush the orange egg masses on the leaf undersides. Also crush or remove for disposal the larvae and adults.