



Grow your own potatoes

Growing your own potatoes at home is not difficult. This guide will help you produce as much as 2 to 4 kg of fresh potatoes for every 2-3 seed pieces you plant.

A. Planting

When to plant: In Alberta plant when the soil begins to warm up, usually in mid April.

Which type of potato to grow depends on when you want to harvest. Adora is an early yellow fleshed potato, good for baking or boiling, Viking is a midseason variety good for boiling and baking. Use certified seed potatoes, which are disease-free. Seed Sources are available in the Consumer Section of the PGA website.

For growing in a pot you'll need:

- a bucket about 50 cm (20 inches) in diameter
- three small potatoes about 7 cm (2.75 inches) high
- compost or soil

For growing in your garden follow these same instructions leaving out the bucket details.

1. Ten days before you plant, place the potatoes in a warm spot with lots of light so that their shoots start growing.
2. Once the potatoes have strong, hard shoots, make a drainage hole in the bottom of the bucket, and then fill it two-thirds full with compost or soil.
3. Press the seed potatoes into the soil, with the shoots facing up. Then fill the bucket near to the top with compost or soil.
4. Place the bucket on bricks for drainage, in a spot that has reasonable light. The ideal temperature is 10-15° C (or 50-60° F).

B. Growing

You can grow potatoes in your home, outside, in a greenhouse, or start off inside and move them outside as the weather gets warmer.

Inside: Place the bucket somewhere with as much light as possible. Turn the bucket regularly so the plant grows straight, and keep the soil moist.

Outside: Grow your plants in full or partial sunlight - if frost is forecast, bring the plants inside or protect them with plastic, a blanket or straw.

In a greenhouse: If it's frosty, close all windows. If it's very sunny, make sure the greenhouse is well ventilated and doesn't overheat.

1. After planting, your plants will go through a number of growth stages (see the illustration at the top of the page), producing first roots, then stems and leaves, and finally flowers and tubers.
2. Add more soil around the base of the plants two or three times during the growing season. Keep them well watered, especially when they start flowering. Soil should be moist, not dry. But don't over-water or the leaves will go mouldy. It's best to water every 2 or 3 days.
3. To grow bigger potatoes, remove any flowers the plants produce.
4. When the plant's leaves turn yellow and start to die, stop watering. After two or three weeks, the tubers in the

ground will be small "baby" potatoes, which you can harvest. For bigger tubers, wait another four to six weeks.

Warnings signs

If the leaves of your plants look mouldy, they could have a bacterial or fungal infection. If you think a plant is infected, dispose of it either by putting it securely in a garbage bag or by burying it.

C. Harvesting

1. When harvesting and handling your potatoes, wear gloves or wash your hands afterwards.
2. Harvest when the weather is dry. Loosen the soil gently, and then reach under the plant to remove the biggest tubers. You can leave the smaller ones to continue growing.
3. If you want to store your potatoes, let them dry on the soil surface in the sun for an hour.
4. Store your potatoes on a shelf in a cool, dark, well-ventilated, dry place. Properly dried and stored potatoes keep well for up to six months.

The potato plant grows up to 100 cm tall and produces a tuber - also called a potato. The potato is so rich in nutrients that it ranks as the world's fourth most important food crop, after maize, wheat and rice. The potato belongs to the nightshade family of flowering plants. Most of the potatoes in Alberta are made into French Fries. A medium sized potato has around 100 calories and is an excellent energy source because it is a complex carbohydrate.

