Growing 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 try to avoid burying leaves) to protect the developing tubers.

Advanced gardeners may benefit from some of the additional details described below.

IMPORTANT TIP!
Avoid planting cold, dormant seed! Play it safe and plant your Seed Potatoes ONLY AFTER sprouts have begun to emerge from the tuber eyes. Sprouting is proof that tubers have broken dormancy and are ready to grow!

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 will 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
Potatoes appreciate fertile soil. Work into the soil plenty of good compost or composted manure. 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.

Greensprouting and Warming Seed Potatoes
Greensprouting (or chitting) is an optional seed potato conditioning procedure. We greensprout our entire crop. Begin greensprouting about four weeks before expected planting date. Warm uncut tubers at 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 the field growing time and is highly recommended.

As an alternative, simple seed warming (70°F for 48-72 hours prior to planting) improves germination rate and yield. Warming seed first is far superior to planting cold seed!
Cutting Seed

We recommend seed pieces that weigh 1/2 ounces (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 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 elemental 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. Let the soil warm to 50°F (measured with a soil thermometer 4” deep at 7 am). Never plant potatoes in soil below 45°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 emergence, place seed eyes-up 1” to 4” deep. (Shallower in the cool North, deeper in the hot South). Plants often take 3 weeks to emerge from the soil.

Foliar Nutrients

For healthy plants we spray foliar nutrients on plant leaves 4 times per season.

- “Guarantee” Seaweed Extract (www.oceanorganics.com)
- “Neptune’s Harvest” Liquid Fish (www.neptunesharvest.com)
- Foliar Minerals - especially inputs rich in Calcium, Phosphorus and Boron - where need has been determined by soil testing or leaf analysis.

Hilling

Once plants are 4-6” tall begin hilling to provide cover for the developing tubers. For this job use a hand-hoe or hilling attachment for your rototiller. Build a nice big hill before mid-season 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 on top of soil.

Harvest and Storage

Potatoes may be eaten any time after tubers begin to size. Tubers will be quarter-size around potato blossom time (although potatoes do not need to bloom to yield well). No need to pull up the entire 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. If you are going to store potatoes, harvest when fully mature 14 days after the vines have withered dead and the potato skins have thickened. Store in bins, wood crates, or burlap or mesh bags. Ideal storage is earth-like: dark, moist, 38°-40°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. The Colorado Potato Beetle - king of troublemakers - on a home garden scale, can best be controlled by your regular and persistent efforts. Twice weekly, with your fingers crush the orange egg masses on the leaf under-sides. Also, crush or remove for disposal any larvae or adults.