

## **We're Here to Help!**

*Have your previous home-grown spuds been duds? Growing a successful potato crop in the Pikes Peak region is equal parts skill and luck. Some gardeners would argue that luck is the primary ingredient, but knowing how to grow potatoes will certainly help! Hopefully this guide will give you some pointers. Come see us for seed potatoes in early Spring.*



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80918 \* 574-8058  
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## **How to Grow Potatoes**



**Phelan Gardens**  
4955 Austin Bluffs Parkway  
Co. Springs, Co. 80918  
719-574-8058  
[www.phelangardens.com](http://www.phelangardens.com)

# Potato Culture

## Site Preparation

Potatoes need a soil that is rich in organic matter and drains quickly. A heavy, clay soil **MUST** be amended with well-rotted manure, compost or Canadian sphagnum peat moss if a potato planting is to be successful.

Add fertilizer before planting. Phosphorus, which promotes tuber development, should be included in the fertilizer. A good 8-10-8 vegetable food is perfect for potatoes. If straight fertilizers (instead of a mix) are to be used, two pounds of potash and three pounds of super-phosphate per 100-foot row is sufficient. Mix all fertilizers thoroughly with the soil before planting. Potatoes should be rotated in the garden every season and should not be planted in the same ground more frequently than every four years.

## Start With Seed Potatoes

Planting only **CERTIFIED SEED POTATOES** will ensure disease

free tubers at planting. Large seed potatoes should be cut into small segments with at least two viable eyes per piece. Lay the cut potatoes on paper in a cool, dry place and dust the cuts with a soil/sulfur mixture to hasten the formation of a callus. Callusing takes about 24 hours. *Purchasing "single drop" potato seed eliminates the need for cutting.*

## Planting Instructions

Potatoes can be planted three weeks before the last expected killing frost which is approximately May 15<sup>th</sup> for downtown Colorado Springs. Outlying areas and higher elevations will have a later date.

Plant the potato sets into trenches 5 inches deep and 12 inches apart with rows at least 2 feet apart. Expect sprouts in three weeks. Five to eight pounds of seed potatoes will plant a 100-foot row.

## Maintenance and Pests

Potato beds should be cultivated frequently to eliminate weed competition and increase the oxygen content of the soil. A soil mound or ridge should be gradually pulled over the

top half of the plants to prevent light from striking newly formed tubers. Potatoes should be irrigated regularly through the growing season but will not tolerate a waterlogged soil. Organic mulches will help regulate soil moisture.

Potato plants should be dusted every two weeks with dusting sulfur to prevent diseases that inhibit tuber growth. Sevin dust will control the Colorado potato beetle and the assorted aphid and psyllid species that occasionally infest potatoes.

## Harvesting

Harvest can begin when the potato tops have dried back. Although "baby" potatoes can be snatched throughout the season. After digging, potatoes should dry only enough to allow a gentle brush away of excess soil. Store potatoes in a humid place with a temperature of 37 to 45 degrees.