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SUCCESSFUL POTATO PLANTING

Need:

Rich, well drained soil - Shale & Covington Soil Builder
Ferti-lome Gardener's Special (11-15-11) or
Organic – Happy Frog (5-8-4)

Seed Potatoes
Dusting Sulfur - for dusting cut potatoes

Preparing the Soil:

Potatoes like rich, well drained soil. It is particularly important when planting seed potatoes to ensure excellent drainage to prevent rot from destroying your plants. Raise the planting area as necessary to ensure good drainage. Potato planting sites should be rotated on a 3-year program. This means you need 3 suitable sites if you want to grow potatoes every year. Plant potatoes in full sun and use plenty of compost!

Selecting proper seed potatoes:

Grocery store potatoes are not appropriate for use as seed potatoes. They have often been sprayed with an anti-sprouting agent, and even organically grown-and-treated potatoes probably haven't had the proper dormancy period for the eyes to sprout correctly. Certified seed potatoes have been checked to make sure they're disease free and are ready to sprout.

Planting:

Before planting, keep your seed potatoes in a lit area (full sun isn't necessary) and at room temperature for a week or two to cause more eye sprouts to come forth from each potato. Afterwards, cut the potato into ice-cube to golfball sized chunks, each with two or three eyes, and dust the chunks with dusting sulfur (prevents rot). Leave cut pieces to dry to two or three days to cause the cut surfaces to crust up and seal. Dig a trench 6", place a chunk every 6 to 12 inches (depending on the size potato you want to harvest) along the trench, and cover with 4" of soil. Plant in late January to the end of February.

Fertilization and growing tips:

Fertilize with Ferti-lome Gardener's Special (11-15-11), or for the organic garden, our Happy Frog (5-8-4). As the potato shoots come forth from the ground to the height of 8" tall, add soil around the stems, leaving roughly 4" of the top growth exposed. As the plant grows, keep covering the bottom of the plant leaving roughly 4" of the top growth. This helps prevent potatoes from having too much green in the skin. Keep the potato plants watered well, but **do not** maintain a soggy bed.

Harvesting your potatoes:

You may begin to harvest your potatoes 2 to 3-weeks after the plants have finished flowering. At this time you will only find small "baby" potatoes if you were to dig up the plant. Potatoes can be harvested any time after this, by gently loosening the soil, reaching under the plant, and removing the largest tubers, leaving the smaller ones to continue growing. If you want late potatoes for storage, wait 2-3 weeks after the foliage dies back. Carefully begin digging a foot or so outside of the row or mound. Remove the potatoes as you find them.