

## Potatoes

Q.A.06.06.2016

Q. Can you tell me how to grow potatoes?

A. Potatoes can be a bit tricky here in the Redding heat. You may have the best luck growing “new potatoes”, these are potatoes harvested young so that they are small and have thin, tender skins. Choose seed potatoes from a local nursery or garden catalog. Red potatoes are a good choice for “new potatoes” but you can also choose white, yellow or blue potatoes.

To Plant, set seed potatoes out in soil that’s been enhanced with organic matter and fertilized with a balanced fertilizer. An easy method is simply to place the potatoes cut side down on top of the soil, and cover them with straw (not hay – it contains seeds). As the sprouts appear, continue to add straw. Potatoes grow from the stem so you want to add the straw or other loose soil and compost up the stem. Once the potatoes plants have blossomed you can start feeling around for potatoes to harvest. When the tops have wilted you can either harvest your crop (there will be very little if any digging) or leave them to harvest as you need them. You can plant as soon as all danger of frost has passed. If you have gophers where you live, consider planting in a raised bed or tub with hardware cloth on the bottom. Otherwise you may be feeding them instead of your family. To do this you start with just a little soil in the bottom of the raised bed and then set potatoes on top of soil and cover with straw. Then follow directions for growing and harvesting above.