



# The Phantom Gardener

Organic from the start, sustainable for the future

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## Growing Potatoes

**Soil Prep:** Potatoes grow in any well-drained fertile soil. Work in compost or aged manure. Using uncomposted manure, lime or wood ash the year of planting will increase the incidence of scab. Turn new ground the year before and plant with a cover crop. Rotate potatoes (and other Solanaceae family members: tomatoes, peppers & eggplants) with other plant families in at least a 3-year or, preferably, a 4 year rotation.

**Planting:** Plant when the soil is 55-60 degrees and dry enough to work easily, about when dandelions bloom. Planting in cooler soil slows emergence & increases the chance of seed piece decay. Planting in hot dry soil also increases the risk of seed piece decay. Plant furrows 4-6" deep, in rows that allow for your style of hilling. Space new potatoes & fingerlings at 8" for maximum tuber set. One pound of seed will usually plant 5-8 row feet.

**Cultivation & Hilling:** Cultivate shallowly as needed during early growth. Hill when plants reach 6" and again at 12-15". After the second hilling, plants will shade & out compete weeds. Don't cover plants completely when hilling. Be gentle so as not to damage the roots. Hilling gives the plants room to develop potatoes between the seed piece and the soil surface, and warms the roots, stimulating growth. Mulch plants after the second hilling to help retain moisture, control weeds & reduce incidence of sunburn.

**Yields:** An average yield is 10 pounds harvested to 1 pound planted (10:1). Yields as high as 20:1 are exceptional, but can be achieved.

