

Planting Potatoes

When to Plant: The best time to plant potatoes in the Napa Valley is after the winter rains have passed and the soil is no longer waterlogged. If you're using a container or grow bag, plant potatoes any time after mid-winter - though be careful not to overwater. Planting in early spring will result in a summer crop while planting in the early fall will produce a winter/spring crop.

Preparing the Soil: Ideally, the soil should be loose, fertile, and sandy with plenty of compost mixed in. Heavy, poorly draining soil should be avoided. Napa clay should be amended with Bumper Crop Organic Soil Builder. Create furrows 4 inches deep and one a half feet apart. Mix Bumper Crop Organic Tomato and Vegetable Food (4-6-3) in with the soil around the furrows.

How to Plant: Cut potatoes into 2" cubes with at least 2 eyes per cube. Let the pieces dry for a day or two before planting. Place the pieces in the furrows one and a half feet apart and cover with 2 inches of soil. As the shoots grow, add more soil until there is a 4 inch ridge above soil level.

Watering: Infrequent but long and deep waterings seem to work best for the Napa Valley. We recommend using a soaker hose. Stop watering once leaves turn from yellow to brown.

Harvesting: Young (new) potatoes are ready to harvest when the plant flowers. Mature potatoes are ready when the plant dies back. Here in the Napa Valley, late potatoes can remain in the ground until needed, though they should be harvested before temperatures warm back up. Dig them up carefully to avoid bruising or cutting the tubers.

