Growing potatoes.

What will be the best spot for growing potatoes?
*Potatoes are root-growing plants requiring full sun to grow. They will produce the best crop when planted in a light, loose well drained moist retaining soil, with a pH of 5.8 to 6.5, this means slightly acidic soil.*

What means pH?
*The pH is the soil level of acidity or alkalinity and is important for the relief of plant minerals. The levels go from pH 1 to 14, pH 7 is neutral and pH above 7 is alkaline and soils fewer than pH 7 are acidic. The plant minerals are more available to plants growing in a soil close to neutral than in a soil either very alkaline or acidic. So have your soil tested before you plant your potatoes.*

How can I test the soil?
*We offer simple working pH meters.*

So when the pH is not in the range of 5.8 to 6.5 I cannot grow potatoes?
*O Yes you can! Potatoes will grow on alkaline soils but the potatoes will be very sensitive to a disease called scab. Scab is absolutely not harmful it only produces rough spots on the skin of the potato tubers but it will not do any harm to the yield or taste. Only the tubers look not as smooth. To prevent potato diseases you should rotated the spots were you plant your potatoes and tomatoes on a three-year rotation plan. Never plant potatoes in soil were you had grown tomatoes the year before.*

How do you grow potatoes?
*Potatoes can be planted in early spring when the ground can be worked and the soil temperature is above the 4 degree Celsius that*
is 40 degree Fahrenheit, potatoes start to grow by 7 degree C. (45 degree F.)
Be sure that the soil is evenly moist and not wet or soggy, in a wet soil your seed potatoes will probably rot. Plant the potatoes in rows 4 inches (10cm) deep 3 inches (7.5 cm) wide and 3 inches (7.5cm) apart. Plant the potatoes in the row 12 inches- (30cm) apart in the row.
Plant the seedlings with the eyes placing upwards and cover them with 3 inches (7.5 cm) of soil.
As the vines start to grow mound over them with soil to keep the developing tubers covered.
This is very important because potatoes that are exposed to sunlight turn green and develop a toxic substance called solanine. Although potatoes can tolerate some light frost you should give them some frost protection when there is a change of night frost special when the plants are young.

What kind of fertilizer should I use?
The best thing is to prepare your soil for potatoes is to work a layer of 3 to 4 inches- (7.5 to 10 cm) well-rotted manure through the soil, this will enrich the soil and improve the drainage. A 5-10-10 fertilizer should be applied at a rate of ½ pound per 10 feet row if you have used rotted manure, if not than you should use 1 pound per 10 feet row.
I always put some bone meal in the planting hole; bone meal is rich on phosphorus that is excellent for root development.

What is a 5-10-10 fertilizer?
On the label you see always three numbers, this is the NPK rating. The first number always represent the percentage of Nitrogen N, the second stand for Phosphorus and the third stand for potassium Potash. Thus a fertilizer bag with an analysis of 5-10-10 would contain 5% N, 10% P and 10% K.
When I have a soil pH from around 7.00 do you advise to plant potatoes in that spot?
For sure you can do that, and you can lower the risk of scab, *(It makes them look pretty ugly)* by adding Aluminium sulphate to the soil. When your pH is 7.00 and you want to lower it to 6.00 than you should use 1.2 pound for 10 square feet.

My table potatoes at home start sprouting can I use them for planting new potatoes?
Absolutely not! Use only certified seed potatoes we have a wide arrange of varieties from early to late, from yellow to white flesh and skins etc in stock. As you know potatoes are susceptible to several serious diseases and our certified seed potatoes are disease free and have been selected to give the best results with the highest yields.

Do I have to water the potatoes?
Yes, for a top yield you should keep your potato vines well watered during the growing season, and special during the time that the potatoes are blooming, because during blooming the plant start with the developing of the new tubers. The best time is to water in the morning, so that the leaves can dry up, this will prevent diseases.

When do I have to stop watering?
As soon as the leaves are turning yellow and start to die you should discontinue watering to allow the skin of the tubers to harden off before harvesting.

When Can I start harvesting?
A rule of thumb is that you can start harvesting three weeks after the plants have finished blooming, you will than harvest good tasting small potatoes.
It is better to wait to two weeks after the plant dies, dig the potatoes late them dry for a coupe hours, this helps the potato skin to mature.
After harvesting store the potatoes in a well ventilated dark room.

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