



Columbia Nursery

Potato Planting Guide for USDA Zones 3–5

Overview

Potatoes thrive in the cooler climates of USDA Zones 3–5. With proper timing and care, they yield a hearty, storable crop ideal for homestead gardens. This guide covers row planting, container growing, and prevention of common diseases like potato scab.

Recommended Varieties for Zones 3–5

Variety Name	Type	Days to Maturity	Notes
Yukon Gold	Yellow Flesh	70–90	Good keeper, versatile
Red Norland	Red Skin	70–80	Excellent early variety
Kennebec	White Flesh	80–100	High yield, stores well
Adirondack Blue	Blue Flesh	80–90	Nutrient-rich, striking appearance
Russet Burbank	Russet	90–120	Best for baking, long storage
Red Pontiac	Red Skin	80–100	Good yields, adaptable to many soils
German Butterball	Yellow Flesh	100–110	Excellent flavor, good storage
Red Gold	Red/Yellow	70–90	Creamy texture, good for roasting

Step 1: Preparing to Plant

- Planting Window:
 - Zone 3: May 15 – June 1
 - Zone 4: May 1 – May 20



Columbia Nursery

- Zone 5: April 15 – May 10
- Soil Temperature: At least 45°F and drying out
- Seed Prep: Cut seed potatoes into pieces with 1–2 eyes each; cure for 2–3 days before planting

Planting in Rows

- Spacing: 12 inches between plants, 30–36 inches between rows
- Depth: 4 inches deep, hilling soil 2–3 times as plants grow
- Soil: Loose, fertile, well-drained; pH 5.0–5.5 to help prevent scab
- Watering: 1–2 inches per week; reduce near harvest

Planting in Containers or Grow Bags

- Container Size: Minimum 10 gallons per plant
- Soil: Loose, well-draining mix rich in compost
- Planting:
 - Fill with 4 inches of soil
 - Plant 2–3 seed pieces per bag
 - Cover with 2 inches of soil; add more as plants grow (hilling)
- Watering: Keep soil evenly moist; containers dry faster than ground

Tips for Preventing Potato Scab

- pH: Maintain acidic soil (ideal range: 5.0–5.5)
- Rotation: Avoid planting in the same area more than once every 3 years
- Certified Seed: Use disease-free certified seed potatoes
- Avoid Fresh Manure: Especially in the fall prior to planting
- Consistent Moisture: Especially during tuber initiation

Harvest & Storage

- New Potatoes: Harvest 60–90 days after planting
- Mature Potatoes: Harvest 2 weeks after tops die back
- Curing: Let sit in shaded area for 10–14 days to cure skins
- Storage: Cool (40°F), dark, well-ventilated location; avoid refrigeration

Quick Tips

- Rotate with legumes or corn to break disease cycles
- Mulch between rows or containers to retain moisture
- Avoid planting near tomatoes or peppers (same disease risks)
- Ideal for succession planting with bush beans or carrots