

GROW POTATOES IN A BAG



Freshly dug potatoes are tender and even a bit juicy—much tastier than the spuds found in grocery stores weeks after they’ve been harvested. If you have a spot where the summer sun shines most of the day (*even on a patio or balcony*), you can raise up to 15 pounds of your own fresh potatoes in a bag. No garden necessary! Here’s how.

1. Get a fabric bag. You can use an ordinary burlap sack or a “grow bag,” a sturdy, woven container sold by many garden centers or online garden suppliers. Choose one that holds about 50 quarts of soil.
2. After the last frost in spring, set the bag in your sunny spot—it will be too heavy to move once it’s planted. Fill the bag with a mix of compost and coir (the fibrous by-product of coconut processing) or peat to about 4 inches deep. Dampen the mix but don’t soak it.
3. New potatoes grow from the “eyes” of mature potatoes, so you start a fresh crop with seed potatoes, which are chunks of mature potatoes with at least one eye that has sprouted. You can cut up potatoes from the grocery store that have sprouted but you’re likely to have more variety choices if you get the seed potatoes from a garden center or online. Fingerling potatoes—the colorful and flavorful oblong types—work especially well in bags.
4. Set six to eight seed potatoes on top of the soil mix in the bag. Spread the potatoes out from each other so each has room to grow roots. Cover them completely with about 2 inches more of the compost-coir mix and dampen the top layer of the mix.
5. Water whenever the mix gets dry, but don’t let it become soggy. In about two weeks, you’ll see leafy green stalks emerging from the top of the soil. Add more of the compost mix up to the lowest leaves.
6. Continue adding the mix every week or two as the stalks grow. Be sure that any tubers you see are well-covered—exposure to sunlight will turn them green. Keep the mix consistently damp. You can stop adding the mix when the bag is full, but water when the mix is dry.
7. In about six weeks, you will see tiny flowers on the plants. A few weeks later, the leaves and stalks will wilt and turn brown -- that means it’s time to harvest. Gently turn the bag on its side and dump out the contents. Plunge your hands into the pile and root around for the buried treasure—your homegrown potatoes!

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