

# Homegrown Potatoes



Homegrown Rosy red fingerlings fresh from the garden! Dirt doesn't cling to them like it does with the Yukon Gems.

I'd never thought of growing potatoes until I visited my family in Denver last year and my green-thumb sister-in-law, Mirna, showed me how. Her homegrown potatoes were finished for the season in October and I helped her dig them up before the first frost. The yield amazed me – at least five pounds. Right then and there determination set in to give the mighty spud a try.



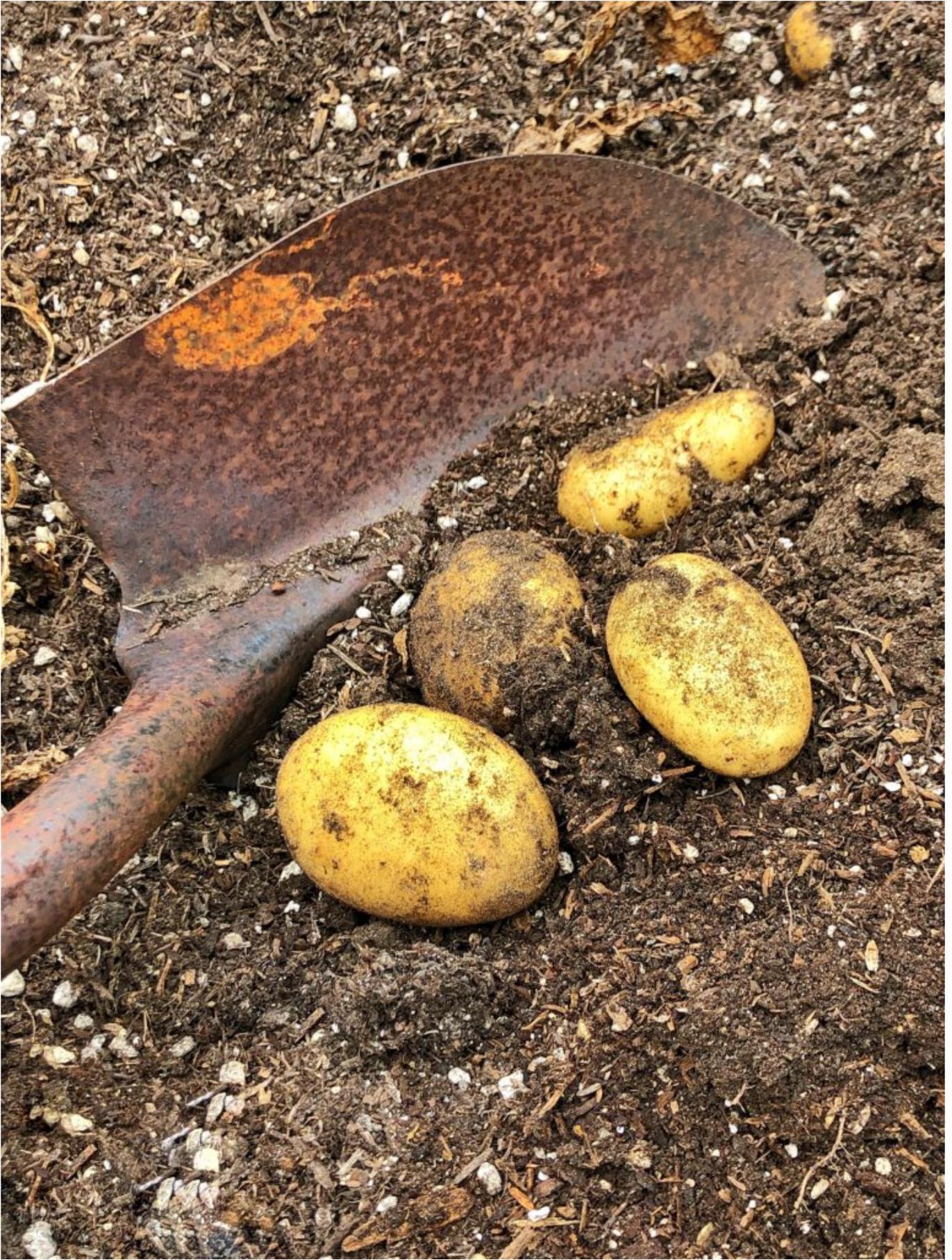
This is how the potatoes come packaged from [Peaceful Valley](#).

My research led me to [Peaceful Valley](#), an online garden shop specializing in organic tubers, seeds and trees. I purchased “seed” potatoes from them after learning grocery store potatoes are often treated to prevent them from sprouting. [Peaceful Valley](#) provides excellent on-line videos with step-by-step instructions on how to cut the eyes and dry them for a day to harden the exposed skin. This prevents the moist surface from creating mildew.



I used two extra bags of soil hilling the potatoes.

Into the ground they went. I waited and waited. It must have been four weeks before I saw the emergence of green leaves. To protect them from sun exposure, you use a technique called "hilling." As soon as leaves arrive, you make a hill of dirt around the base to keep them as far underground as possible. I hilled my plants many times as they grew tall. When the leaves dry out, and wilt the potatoes are ready to harvest. At first I dug up a few here and there to eat that night. Most of the potatoes I planted were Red Thumb Fingerling and French Fingerling. The names accurately reflect the small, dusty red, oblong potatoes that came out of the ground looking like they've just been to the beauty parlor – all cleaned up! Their creamy richness lent themselves to simple boiling and steaming to eat with salt and butter.



These are the larger Yukon Gems. Buttery!

It's now late spring and my appetite for bright summer veggies kicked in. Even though I relished in my every other day harvesting, I dug up all the potatoes to make room for squash, cucumbers, poblanos and cantaloupe. I love the activity of a treasure hunt, and as I turn the dirt, it's like magic as potatoes appear on my shovel. The entire raised bed gifted me with a yield of around 15 pounds! As I crumbled the soil to prepare it for its next visitors, my fingers combed through the dirt to find at least 30 more potatoes, comfortably tucked into their warm home, still hiding from me.



Summer squash now occupies the potato patch.

What am I going to do with all these potatoes? Needing a cool place to store them, an idea came to me. Put the spuds in my wine cooler to save them from sprouting. San Diego's climate is not conducive to storing produce that needs to be dry. I hope this works! Let me know about your homegrown potato-planting experience and how you keep them fresh. Next week, a simple recipe that honors the virtue of my new favorite winter vegetable.

*"I only want to live in peace, plant potatoes and dream!"*

– **Tove Jansson, Moomin: The Complete Tove Jansson Comic Strip, Vol. 1**

Ciao for now,

mary 