



Organic Seed Potatoes, Fingerlings,
Onion Sets, Shallots, and Garlic

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COMING TO TERMS

Certified Potato Seed A rigorous certification and inspection process (distinct from organic certification) ensures that seed potato meets standards for freedom from diseases or pests. All the potato seed sold by The Maine Potato Lady is certified by the state in which it is grown. Our products must also meet the certification requirements of the State of Maine Department of Agriculture. During the growing season, each lot is field inspected three times for specific pests and diseases. A 400-tuber sample, taken at harvest time, is grown out in Florida during the winter, then visually inspected for viruses and for variety purity. In order to be designated as Certified Seed, the sample must show 5% or less total virus. Certification is not complete until the winter grow-out inspection has been finalized (usually at the end of January). Certification represents only that the seed potatoes were inspected and certified in accordance with the state regulations.

Organic or Certified Organic Both of these terms refer only to products that have been produced on a farm that meets the standards established by the National Organic Program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The farm must comply with USDA/NOP regulations and pass an inspection by an approved accredited certifying agency. Production practices must enhance the health of the farm. No synthetic inputs are allowed.

Conventional In conventional agriculture, synthetic inputs (fertilizers, insecticides, fungicides, and herbicides) are used to produce the highest yields and maximize profits. There are good conventional growers who use crop rotation and integrated pest management to minimize their use of synthetic inputs. The Maine Potato Lady offers products from some carefully-selected conventional growers.

What is sustainable farming? Sustainability is a principle by which farmers use sound farming practices to meet their needs in the present while consciously sustaining and preserving resources for future generations. Sustainability encompasses three areas: land and natural resources stewardship; plant and animal production practices; and the way in which the farm contributes to, and is integrated in, the community.

Land and Natural Resources The sustainable farmer thinks about and uses water resources wisely. To maintain quality and minimize pollution, the farmer must consider things like types of irrigation, salinity buildup in the soil, and runoff pollution. Around the farm, the sustainable farmer plans for wildlife by protecting a variety of habitats and providing field head rows and wind breaks. The farmer uses good tillage practices, cover crops, and mulch to minimize soil erosion, and considers using alternative on-farm energies such as biodiesel or wind.

Plant and Animal Production Practices The sustainable farmer believes in "healthy soil, healthy plants, and healthy animals." Soils are alive and must be nurtured and fed to sustain us now and in the future. Animal and green manures, compost, tillage, and crop diversification are the building blocks of healthy soil. Natural and renewable inputs are used as much as possible, with synthetic inputs used very little or not at all.

Integration of Farm and Community The sustainable farm contributes to the community in many ways: through fair labor practices (equal opportunities, fair wages, and good working conditions); by purchasing supplies for farm and home locally; and by providing quality foods and other products to members of the community