

take a closer look



Adapted from Better Crops –
The Fertilizer in Your Salt Shaker

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fertilizer in your salt shaker

The components of fertilizer – potassium, phosphorus and nitrogen – are natural and safe. In fact, sometimes they are added directly to the food we eat and the water we drink. For example, people may choose to use potassium chloride (KCl) as a table salt substitute to season their food and homeowners often use potassium chloride to soften hard water. It may surprise you to learn that this is the same potassium chloride that is used in commercial fertilizers. Let's **Take a Closer Look** at the fertilizer in your salt shaker.

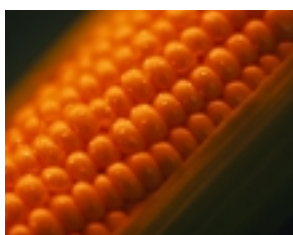


The Fertilizer Institute

Nourish, Replenish, Grow

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Potassium is a very soluble nutrient and once in plants it moves about easily, supporting a number of important growth and development functions. Potassium supports growing crops and that explains why it is taken up in very large quantities from the soil, second only to nitrogen. Soils which are low in potassium can be replenished with fertilizer or manure to improve crop yield and quality. Fertilizer granules are preferred by farmers, providing a guaranteed concentration and release pattern that can be managed to match plant requirements.



Whatever the intended use, as a food supplement or a fertilizer nutrient, the potassium chloride we consume is exactly the same.

Potassium is plentiful in nature.

Potassium fertilizer, often called potash, is one of the primary nutrients required for plant, animal and human life. It is natural, safe and abundant in the environment.

Potassium is mined from ancient marine salts from sea beds that dried up more than 350 million years ago – even before dinosaurs roamed the earth. Today, these ancient salts are recovered and used for a variety of products, including fertilizers and table salt substitutes. Once it is mined, potassium intended for plant or human use is washed to remove excess sodium since neither people nor plants benefit from excess sodium.

While the majority of mined and washed potassium is used as fertilizer, its other uses may be surprising. Potassium chloride is commonly used as a salt substitute for people on low sodium diets. It is also found in water softeners to reduce hard minerals.

Since potassium is not stored in the human body, it must be continually replaced. In fact, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration recognizes that “diets containing foods that have a healthy supply of potassium and are low in sodium may reduce the risk of high blood pressure and stroke.” Potatoes, bananas, yogurt, orange juice and milk are all excellent sources of potassium.

Some examples of food sources of potassium (K).

Food/serving	K content, mg	Food/serving	K content, mg
8 oz. whole milk	371	1 medium potato	610
1 medium banana	467	8 oz. yogurt	531
8 oz. orange juice	473	1 tomato	273
3 oz. sirloin steak	311		

From USDA Nutrient Database:

<http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/foodcomp/Data/SR15/wtrank/sr15a306.pdf>

Note: FDA Daily Reference Values (DRVs) generally indicate 3,500 mg of potassium.

While there isn't a Recommended Daily Allowance (RDA) for potassium, 2,000 to 3,000 mg daily is suggested. Less-processed foods usually have more potassium.

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