

potatoes

The story of



Seeds



The potatoes that we cook and eat are stores of starch grown by a potato plant as a way of surviving cold winters, when the leaves die. They are called tubers. Potato plants grow each spring from a small potato tuber which the farmer keeps from the year before. The farmer puts the seed potatoes in the light until they chit. This means they grow small white shoots. After chitting, the tubers are planted 15 cm deep in rich soil which has been ploughed. Compost or manure from farm animals is dug into the soil to make it fertile as potatoes need lots of nutrients to grow well.

The small shoots grow out of the soil and leaves begin to form. Roots grow down to hold the plant firmly in the ground. As the stems and leaves grow taller, the farmer piles up soil from between the rows to cover the lower stems. New potatoes start to grow on the roots. They must be kept away from light under the piles of soil or they will turn green and become poisonous. By the end of the summer lots of potatoes have grown and the leaves begin to die.

Plants



Harvest



Small, sweet new potatoes are harvested in the summer and need to be eaten in a few days so they are sent to shops right away. In the autumn, large main crop potatoes are dug up using a machine and put into sacks. Potatoes can be stored for the winter in a cool, dry, dark place and sold in the spring. They may be stored in a clamp, a large container made from straw bales and covered with a pile of straw to keep the potatoes away from frost.



Composting

Potato peelings help to make compost. They rot down after a few months and provide nutrients for other crops. If you grow potatoes at home you can compost the leaves after harvesting.



Eating

Potatoes are eaten as part of a balanced diet with other vegetables and meat or fish. Raw potato peelings can be put in a compost bin but we do not compost cooked food as it attracts pests like rats which carry diseases.



Preparing food

Many vegetables can be eaten raw but if we don't cook potatoes our bodies cannot digest them. Potatoes have starch in them and give us energy so that we can be active. The peel is very good food and we should cook potatoes with their peel on. Potatoes can be roasted, boiled, mashed, baked or made into chips. Which are your favourite?



Village shop

The farmer drives to a nearby village and delivers sacks of potatoes. Local deliveries do not use much fuel. In East Anglia we grow lots of crops and we do not need to import vegetables like potatoes from other countries. Importing crops from far away countries uses a lot of fuel and makes lots of 'food miles'. Customers who live near the shop buy a sack of potatoes to keep in a cool dark place at home. The potatoes will keep for a few months without rotting.

Good for
Energy