



POTATOES

What is It?

- Potatoes were originally grown in South America, with the first evidence of potato cultivation dating back to 8,000 BCE. That's close to 10,000 years ago!
- Potatoes are part of the nightshade family with tomatoes and peppers.
- The edible part of the potato grows underground and is called a tuber. Tubers are not roots; they are part of the plant's stem that stores nutrients to help the plant regrow in the spring.
- Potatoes are the fourth largest crop worldwide, just behind corn, rice, and wheat crops. There are over 4,000 varieties of potatoes, making them the most abundant non-grain food product on earth.
- Washington is the second largest producer of potatoes in the United States.
- "New" potatoes are young potatoes that are harvested before they fully mature.
- Researchers are growing potatoes on the International Space Station due to their high nutritional content and ease of growing.

Grow It

Potatoes make a great addition to Washington gardens. They can be grown directly in the ground, raised beds, or containers. Plant seed potatoes in the spring when daytime temperatures reach 60 degrees F. Be sure to plant only seed potatoes from a reputable source to avoid introducing blight or other diseases.

Potatoes do well in direct sunlight and well-drained soil. Seed potatoes should be chopped into 1-inch pieces with at least two "eyes" on them before planting. Seed potatoes must be sown deeply and have proper room to grow when planted both in the ground and containers.

Water heavily for the first 8 weeks, then begin watering regularly. New potatoes can be harvested seven to eight weeks after planting. Harvest mature potatoes once the green leaves and stems above ground have dried and turned brown. Potatoes are harvested by digging into the soil around the plant.





Make It

Recipe: Herbed Potato Salad
Yield: 6 servings

Ingredients	Directions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 1/2 pounds red potatoes cut into cubes• 1/2 cup light Italian dressing• 1/2 tablespoon spicy brown mustard• 1 tablespoon parsley fresh, chopped• 1 teaspoon garlic salt• 1/4 teaspoon black pepper• 1/2 cup red bell pepper, chopped• 1/2 cup green bell pepper, chopped• 1/2 cup green onions, chopped	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. In a large pot, cook potatoes in boiling water until tender, about 10 minutes (do not overcook).2. Drain well and let cool.3. Place potatoes in a medium bowl.4. In a small bowl, combine dressing, mustard, parsley, seasonings and whisk with fork; pour over potatoes and toss well.5. Carefully stir in bell peppers and green onions. Cover and chill until ready to serve.

This recipe was adapted from [eatFresh](#).



Potatoes in a field, credit: WSDA



Make It

Recipe: Potato Pals
Yield: 6 servings

Ingredients	Directions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 pound potatoes, cut into 1-inch pieces• 1 tablespoon vegetable oil• 1/2 teaspoon salt• 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder or 2 cloves of garlic, minced	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Lightly grease a large baking sheet.2. In large bowl, stir together all ingredients.3. Spread potatoes on the baking sheet, leaving space between pieces.4. Roast until potatoes are soft, about 20 minutes. Toss a couple of times while roasting.5. Refrigerate leftovers within two hours.

This recipe was adapted from [Washington SNAP-Ed](#).



Filling a potato storage shed, credit: WSDA



Eat It

Potatoes are starchy vegetables. Starch is a carbohydrate that our bodies break down into glucose to give us energy. They are rich in several other important nutrients as well, including B vitamins which help our cells grow and stay healthy, and fiber which is important for maintaining a healthy heart and digestive system. Potatoes contain vitamin C, which helps with healing and supports immune function, but new potatoes (those picked early in the growing season when they are still small) have higher vitamin C content than fully mature potatoes.

Potatoes also provide essential minerals, like potassium, a type of electrolyte that supports heart health, and iron, which is essential for making red blood cells and building muscles.

Read It

- Potato Pants!, by Laurie Keller
- The Couch Potato, by Jory John
- The Enormous Potato, by Aubrey Davis
- The Greatest in the World, by Ben Clanton

Find It

- Washington potatoes are available at many grocery stores. Check the product label or shelf tag to see where they were grown. They are also commonly found at Washington state's many farmers markets, farm stands, and other local markets from August through May.
- Select potatoes that are firm and clean; a little dirt is okay. Avoid potatoes with a lot of sprouted eyes, wrinkled or wilted skin, discoloration, dark spots, soft areas, cut or bruised surfaces, or areas that are greening. Store potatoes in a cool area, 42–48 degrees F with good ventilation, away from direct sunlight. Refrigeration is not recommended as cold temperatures change the sugar and starch content, which changes the texture and flavor. Scrub off dirt and trim any rotted areas when ready to use.

This resource was adapted for Washington state from Montana Harvest of the Month Harvest at Home: Potatoes
[Harvest of the Month - Home handout for Potatoes](#)



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Washington Harvest of the Season: Potatoes