

Growing potatoes in bags

Everyone loves a potato and has a favourite way to eat them. They are probably the most versatile and delicious veg we have. Whatever space you have, they are easy to plant and to grow. For older participants, growing potatoes can provide a hands-on, sensory activity and is a great opportunity to generate discussion. For younger participants, this growing activity is a great way to link the food we eat back to its roots, including where and how it is grown. Once you harvest your potatoes, you can go on to do further cooking activities together!

Preparation

1. Get everyone involved right from the very start! Divide up the shopping and preparation tasks between the older and younger generations.
2. Prepare the activity area and put cloth on the tables:
 - a) make sure there's plenty of space for everyone to sit at the table, in chairs or wheelchairs, and that the surface is at the right height
 - b) keep a dustpan and brush handy to clean up any spilt compost
 - c) set out equipment and materials according to group size and who can do what
 - d) prepare for hand washing and cleansing with a wipe or using gloves as suited to the participants
3. Gather other resources that will provoke conversation and stimulate memory. Recipe books and pictures of potato-based food products can help older participants to share their knowledge and recipes with younger participants
4. **Print Garden Organic potato growing resource [here](#).**

This activity uses the Garden Organic activity sheet for growing potatoes which can be downloaded from their website.

Materials and equipment

- Gloves
- Scoops and trowels
- Re-usable cloths for tables
- Container at least 30cm deep and wide. You can also use an old compost, rubble or thick bin liner bag rolled down and with drainage holes added
- Peat-free compost from garden centre
- Certified disease free organic 'seed' potatoes (not potatoes bought for eating) from a garden centre
- Dustpan and brush

Session plan

1. Make everyone comfortable at the table, wearing gloves and plasters if anyone has any cuts
2. Introduce the activity, clearly explaining what is being planted. Talk about potatoes and link to relevant cooking and farming activities you've done together.
3. **Follow the instructions in the Garden Organic activity handout.**
4. Clear the tables and put everything away.
5. Put the potato containers outside. Check them for growth and water weekly, if possible, with participants. Add more compost every time the leaves start showing until you reach about 5cm from the top edge.

Check the potatoes for growth and water weekly

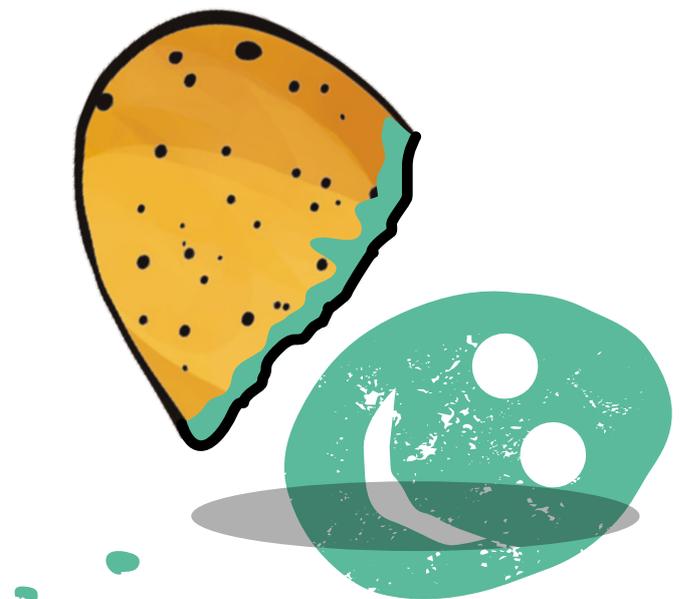


Generate conversation, and explore sensory experiences

- Look at old photos of potato picking, fields of potatoes, potato forks and 'spuds' (a narrow spade used for digging potatoes!)
- Discuss where potatoes come from (Peru), and when they were introduced to the UK, most commonly thought to be by Sir Francis Drake or Sir Walter Raleigh's employee Thomas Harriot.
- Talk about how you like to eat potatoes, maybe it's fish and chips, Lancashire hotpot, roast potatoes or with mint and butter?
- Show some pictures of ugly vegetables!
- Questions you could ask everyone:
 - Have you ever been potato picking?
 - Which type of potato do you like best?
 - Does anyone know any potato songs?
 - Have you ever made potato stamps or art?
- Questions you could ask older participants:
 - What are some of the old varieties of potatoes called?
 - How has buying potatoes changed over the years?
 - Do you like to buy potatoes clean or dirty?
 - Do potatoes taste better today?

Other ideas for extending opportunities

- Take photos of planting and harvesting
- Create a display together to include potato facts, recipes and jokes
- Do some potato printing together
- Organise a tasting session to try different varieties of potato
- Link up with parents and wider family and friends for a potato growing competition
- Cook up some potato dishes together, or make a potato salad.



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