

Potatoes:

Regular or White Potatoes and Sweet Potatoes

Nutritional Components of Potatoes

Carbohydrates
Water
The mineral potassium
Vitamins A, C, B5
(pantothenic acid), and
B6 (pyridoxine)

Two different kinds of potatoes are grown in the school garden. In January we plant **regular potatoes** (sometimes called white potatoes), which we harvest in May. In May we also plant sweet potatoes that we harvest in October or November.

White Potatoes:

- The potato is a member of the nightshade or **Solanaceae** Family.
- Leaves, stems, and green skin are poisonous and can cause an upset stomach.



- To plant **new potatoes**, cut an existing potato into several pieces with 2 or 3 **eyes** on each.
- Use a good **organic** fertilizer with phosphorous.
- As the potato plant grows "hill it up" with soil or compost around it.
- White potatoes are ready to harvest when the plant dies back, usually in May. Dig carefully!
- Store the potatoes in a cool place (not the refrigerator) and out of sunlight.

Can the potato see with its eyes? (Refer to the glossary.) _____

What particular nutrient is really important to potatoes? _____

Why do we add more soil around the potatoes as they grow? _____

Growing White Potatoes in Containers and Small Spaces:

Potato towers are an easy and fun way to grow white potatoes in containers without taking up much garden space. Find a spot in your yard with full sun. Ideally the spot will also be near a water outlet. Make a cylinder that is 3 feet to 4 feet tall and 2 feet to 3 feet wide out of chicken wire, heavy gauge wire, wooden fencing, or even old tires. Set the cage in the sunny location and secure the ends of the cage with wire fasteners. Line the inside of the cage with hay, straw, cardboard, or newspaper to prevent the soil from falling out and put a 4-inch-deep layer of compost or fine soil in the bottom of the cage. Place 4 or 5 seed potatoes that have at least 3 "eyes" apiece on top of the compost and space them 6 inches apart. Cover the potatoes with a 3 inch to 4-inch-deep layer of soil. Water them well. As the potato plants grow, line more of the cage with newspaper and cover them with more compost. When the soil line is 6 inches from the top of the cage, stop adding soil as the potato plants grow out the top of the cage. Keep them well watered. In early summer when the plants start to yellow, remove the wire fasteners, open the cage, and harvest the potatoes. We hope you have fun growing potatoes in containers in your backyard!

Sweet Potatoes:

- They are not true potatoes but are **perennial** vines belonging to the **Convolvulaceae** or morning glory family. Also, sweet potatoes are not yams, which are in a different family.
- They are grown from vine cuttings called "**slips**" rather than from seeds.
- The young leaves and shoots are **edible** and may be eaten like spinach.
- Plant the slips in a sunny location in loose, rich organic soil.
- Use a good organic fertilizer as these plants grow fast.
- They need lots of sunshine and water.
- By mid-fall you can start digging the potatoes. The vines will not die back unless there is a freeze.



Are sweet potatoes also yams? _____

How will we know when the sweet potatoes are ready to harvest? _____

When will we harvest sweet potatoes? _____