

FARM FRESH  
**HARVEST**  
OF THE MONTH



MAR 07

## POTATOES

### POTATO FACTS

- Potatoes belong to the family Solanum (meaning quiet or peaceful), along with tomatoes, eggplants and peppers.
- Potatoes originally came from the high mountains of South America, where they could survive freezing temperatures. The Incas preserved them for year-round use in breads, pancakes and other nutritious meals.
- Along with rice, corn and wheat, potatoes are one of the four most consumed foods in the world today.
- The edible parts of potatoes are the tubers: swollen, underground stems attached to the plant's roots.
- Over 5,000 varieties of potatoes are grown in Peru.
- Most vegetables grow from seeds but potatoes grow from eyes! The eye is a small, dark spot on a potato that produces a shoot, which then becomes a new plant. Pieces of potatoes are saved from each year's harvest and are planted the next year, with the eyes producing the new potatoes.
- Potatoes are the leading source of Vitamin C in the American diet, most of which is concentrated in the potato skin.
- Potatoes are a great source of complex carbohydrates, which are the best source of energy for the body.
- In 1995, the potato was the first vegetable to grow in outer space.

### ACTIVITY

### Grow Your Own Potatoes!

FOR GRADES 3-5

#### Materials:

Seed potatoes (available at plant nurseries, check with Portland Nursery for school garden discounts)

Shovels

A sunny planting site that has nutrient-rich soil. Add compost (like Portland Nursery's Black Forest) if needed.

#### Procedure:

- 1) Mid to late March marks the beginning of potato planting time in the Northwest. Potatoes can be planted through June for over-wintering potatoes.
- 2) Dig soil at least 12 inches deep, removing rocks or debris and adding compost if needed.
- 3) Plant potato seeds about 8 inches deep and 12 inches apart.
- 4) Water regularly.
- 5) Harvest potatoes two weeks after the plant tops die. Or, if you want baby potatoes, harvest two weeks after the plants have finished flowering. You can gently loosen the soil, reach under the plant and take the tubers you want and leave the rest to continue maturing.

