

Planting Potatoes

Potatoes are the ideal crop for a school garden. If you plant them at the start of the summer term, you can leave them over the long holidays and harvest them in the autumn. They can be planted straight into the garden.

What you need

- Chitted maincrop seed potatoes
- Trowels and forks
- Gardening gloves
- Rake

What to do

1. Make sure the planting area is weed-free. Children could use a fork to pull up any weeds.
2. Dig a hole which is 7cm to 15cm deep for each potato. The potatoes should be placed around 35cm apart.
3. Plant the potatoes with the shoots pointing upwards and cover them with soil.
4. Watch for shoots appearing. When the plants are about 20cm tall, 'earth up' the growing plants by drawing soil up over the stem and leaves, leaving about 10cm exposed to the Sun. This prevents the growing tubers being pushed up into the light, which will turn them green.
5. In September, cut the stems down to about 5cm and leave them for two weeks before harvesting.
6. Harvest the potatoes on a dry day and leave them to dry on the surface of the soil for a few hours.
7. Store them in paper bags in a cool, frost-free place.

Ways to extend this activity

Predict how long it will take for the potatoes to grow 15cm. Create a line graph showing their growth over time. Research recipes using potatoes. Find out where potatoes originated from and how they arrived in Britain.

National Curriculum Links

Identify and describe the different parts of plants. Explore the part that flowers play in the life cycle of flowering plants. Describe the life process of reproduction in some plants.

