

Harvest of the Month

February – Potatoes



At the Root of Potato History

Very few foods can be pinpointed to one single origin. The potato is one of the few, and the pinpoint location is Peru about 13,000 feet above sea level in the Andes, over 7,000 years ago. Potatoes are consumed worldwide and throughout all of North American and South America indigenous (original) varieties exist in plenty. *Check out these Peruvian Potatoes! Full of color and good nutrition!*



- Potatoes were a staple crop of the Incas in the 1400s
- Spanish conquistadors brought potatoes back to Europe in the mid 1600s.
- Because the potato is a member of the deadly nightshade family, Europeans were initially afraid to eat it.
- By the early 1800s, the Irish came to depend on potatoes and when blight (a fungus), destroyed the crop 1845-1851, more than 1 Million Irish died and 4 million left the country.

The Benefits of eating potatoes

- Miners once traded gold for potatoes because they were valued for their vitamin C.
- One medium potato provides over 25% of your daily requirement for vitamin C, vitamin B6 and potassium.
- In fact, potatoes contain eighteen vitamins and minerals essential for healthy growth.

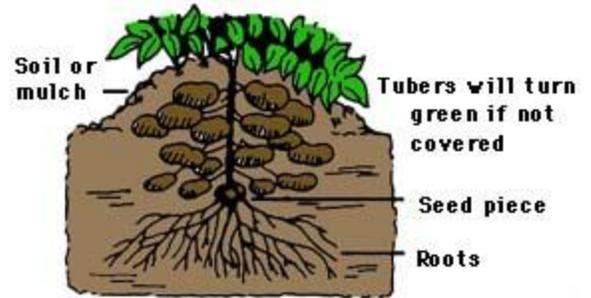


Figure 6

Potatoes are tubers. Tubers differ from roots. They are swollen underground stems, capable of producing new plants and storing energy for the parent plant.

Don't Eat Green Potatoes

It is important to keep mounded soil or mulch over growing potatoes. Exposure to light causes the underground stem to create chlorophyll, which by itself is harmless. But, the green color is a sign that levels of solanine, which is produced at the same time in potatoes, as chlorophyll have increased as well. Potatoes naturally produce small amounts of this mild toxin as a defense against insects, but the levels increase with the exposure to light and warmth. To avoid the development of solanine, it is best to store potatoes in cool, dimly lit areas, and to cut away green areas before eating.

There are over 5,000 types of potatoes!

