

## GROWING ACTIVITY 1

# Growing potatoes in bags

Everyone loves a potato and has their own 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 reminisce and generate discussion. For younger participants, this growing activity is a great way to link the food we eat back to its roots – 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 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/cleansing with a wipe/using gloves as suited to the participants
3. gather other resources that will provoke conversation and stimulate memory. Tools from the past, recipe books and pictures of potato food related products can help the older participants to reminisce and 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/trowels
- Re-useable cloths for tables
- Container at least 30cm deep and wide. You can also use an old compost/rubble/thick bin liner bag rolled down/with drainage holes
- Peat free compost (from garden centre)
- Certified disease free organic 'seed' potatoes (not potatoes bought for eating) from a garden centre
- dustpan and brush

Always check for the latest covid advice and regulations before running your Food for Life Get Together activity. For more information:

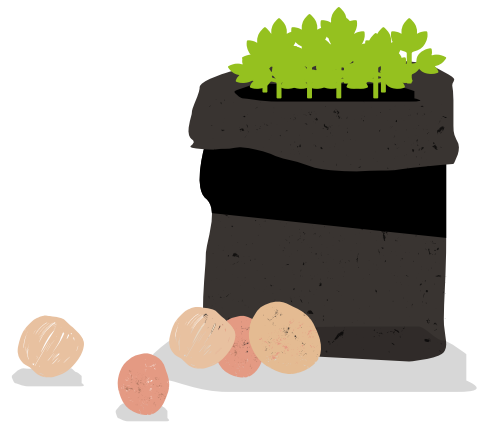
**[fflgettogether.org/support/covid-19-guidance](https://fflgettogether.org/support/covid-19-guidance)**

## Session plan

1. Make everyone comfortable at the table, wearing gloves and plasters if 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 – if possible, where residents can see them. 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



## Opportunities for all

### FOR THOSE WHO CAN PARTICIPATE WELL

There are lots of hands-on opportunities for those who can get involved. Perhaps pair more able participants up with a less able resident or ask them to help distributing equipment and materials. They can check for early growth and decant compost into smaller manageable quantities or containers. They can keep an eye out for anyone struggling to bend and lift and watch out for any signs of dizziness and balance issues.

### FOR THOSE WITH SOME LIMITS TO PARTICIPATION

Offer more step-by-step support. 'Raise' the ground by using tables to put the containers/bags on. Provide chairs or stools for the participants to use if they need to. Use plastic potting trays with sides to empty the compost into prior to planting the potatoes so it is easier to scoop. Ask these participants to weigh and measure and the biggest and smallest potatoes at harvest.

### FOR THOSE WITH SEVERE LIMITS TO PARTICIPATION

Have pictures of the activity and ensure verbal instructions are clear

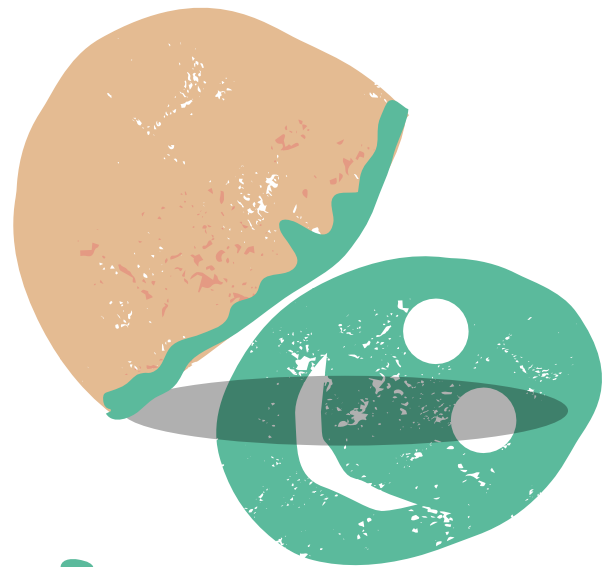
Recommendations as above but use hands to scoop compost if it is difficult to hold a scoop. Encourage participants to feel the seed potatoes and shoots. At harvest time, these participants can be encouraged to guess the number of potatoes that will be dug up, and count them as they come out of the ground.

## Generate conversation, Reminisce 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 introduced (Sir Walter Raleigh & Elizabeth I)
- Talk about how you like to eat potatoes – e.g. fish & chips, Lancashire hotpot, roast potatoes, with mint and butter etc.
- 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 potato art?
- Questions you could ask older participants:
  - Did you get involved with growing or working on a farm during WWII e.g. land girls, evacuees?
  - What were 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 the older participants' wider family and friends for a potato growing competition
- Cook up some potato dishes together, or make a potato salad



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