

Our mission is to increase awareness and understanding of agriculture among New Jersey educators and students. You can learn more on our website newjersey.agclassroom.org

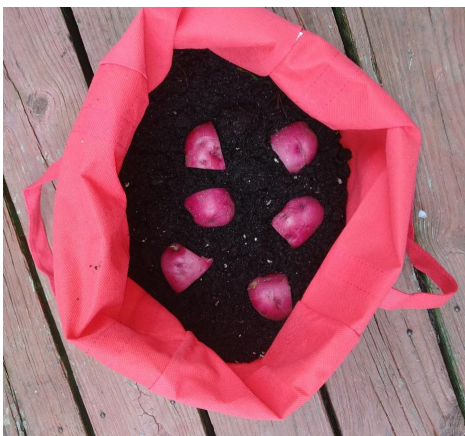


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Kids love French fries. But do your students know they are made from potatoes? They probably don't know that potatoes grow underground, and they surely don't know that even so, potatoes are not roots. They are tubers. This month we take a look at how potatoes are grown.

Grow Potatoes In Your Classroom

Hot potato, couch potato, small potatoes, meat and potatoes - the potato is so ubiquitous in the American diet that it has cultivated many expressions. Easy to grow and easy to store, this starchy vegetable is a staple of diets around the world. It's also simple to show students how to grow potatoes right in your classroom. All you need is a porous reusable shopping bag, some soil, and a couple of organic potatoes.



Lessons of the Month

Sack of Potatoes

Grades PreK-5
Planting activity

Lessons of the Month

Enzyme Potato Lab

Grades 9-12

In this lesson from *Science Lessons That Rock*, students will use potatoes to test the reaction rate of an enzyme called catalase.

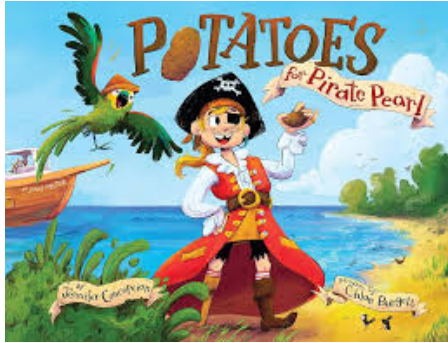
Catalase is found in the cells of many living tissues. It speeds up a reaction which breaks down hydrogen peroxide, a toxic chemical, into two harmless substances: water and oxygen.

Click [here](#) for the complete lesson.

suitable for all grades

March is a great time to plant potatoes. In this lesson, students learn how potatoes grow from seed potato to harvest by planting them in a reusable shopping bag in the classroom.

This activity is suitable for all grade levels. Click [here](#) for the lesson.

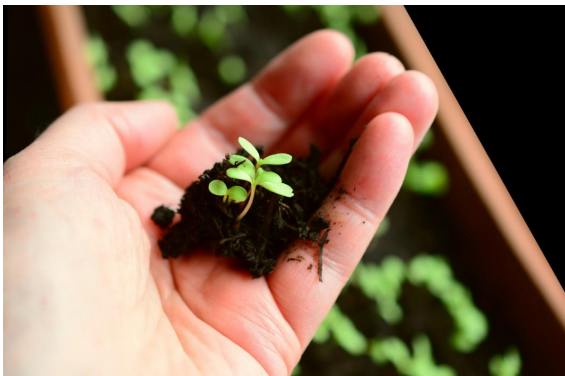


Library Corner

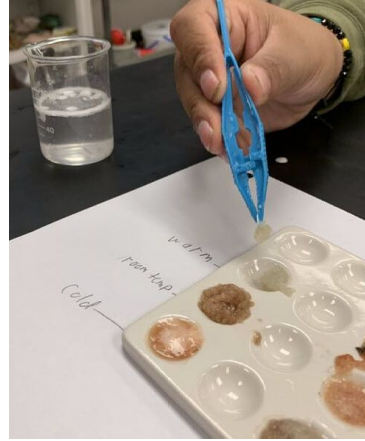
Potatoes for Pirate Pearl *By Jennifer Concepcion* **Grades K-3**

Pirate Pearl and her parrot Petunia are hungry after they make their yucky hardtack biscuits walk the plank, so they go in search of a perfect provision for their next voyage.

They end up on Farmer Fay's potato farm, where they learn how to plant, grow, and harvest potatoes. They learn that potatoes are so easy to grow, Pirate Pearl can even plant them in barrels on her ship!



Our lesson *How to Plant Seeds for a Cool-Season Vegetable Crop* will show you what to plant and how. Click [here](#) for the lesson.

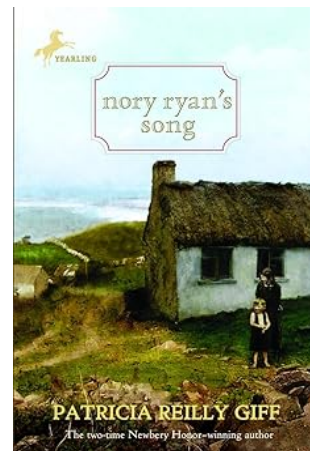


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Nory Ryan's Song *by Patricia Reilly Giff* **Grades 4-7**

Times are never easy in Maidin Bay on the west coast of Ireland, but in 1845, a terrible blight attacks the potatoes. No crop means starvation.

Twelve-year-old Nory must summon the courage and ingenuity to find food, to find hope, and to find a way to help her family survive.



It's Time to Plan Your Spring School Gardens!

March is the time to prepare school gardens for planting. Consider a crop of cool-season vegetables that can be planted in early April and harvested in June before the school year ends. All of your students will be able to experience the entire growing process from seed to harvest.

Meet a New Jersey Farmer

John Probasco of Probasco Potato Farm

Probasco Potato Farm in Chesterfield, Burlington County grows potatoes, as well as field corn, pumpkins, soybeans, and wheat.

Tell us your farm story.

I am a 12th generation farmer. Our family moved to New Jersey from Queens and settled in northern Burlington County in the late 1940's, three generations ago. My great-grandfather, C.B., was the largest potato grower in New Jersey!



When my dad Chris took over the farming operation from my grandfather John in the early 1990's, he changed the business operation from potatoes packed in bags to selling washed potatoes for potato chips.

We currently grow about 250 acres of potatoes. We ship 300,000 pounds of potatoes each day. That's six tractor-trailer loads!

Other crops include field corn, pumpkins for wholesale, soybeans, and wheat for soil rotation.

All of the farming ground we own is Farmland Preserved. That gave us capital to purchase more parcels, so that today we own 1,500 acres of farmland in New Jersey.

Potatoes are planted in early March and harvested around July 15, depending on the weather, of course. Sometimes we leave them in the ground until the price is reasonable or the supply is there for selling them.

What is the most important thing you want the students to know, that you learned on the farm?

I learned EVERYTHING on the farm. The most important thing I think is to manage stress and your emotions. To learn what you can control and what you cannot. And how to make the best of what you are presented with.

What is your favorite part of your job?

Seeing a successful crop of anything that we grow.

What is your biggest challenge on your family farm?

Time is the biggest challenge that I face. There always seems to be a struggle to manage work time with family time.

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