



Seed Potatoes

Interesting Facts

Potatoes grow well in almost every part of this country, even up to and within the Arctic Circle.

What are seed potatoes?

Potatoes grow from eyes—pieces of tuber used to clone the parent plant. Each seed potato can be a small whole potato or a part of a potato, but it must have at least one eye to produce new growth. Seed potatoes are grown under a regulated certification program to make sure that they are as disease-free as possible.

Where are seed potatoes produced in BC?

Seed potatoes are grown in the Pemberton Valley, the Lower Mainland, the Kootenay region, the Okanagan Valley and on Vancouver Island.

How many seed potatoes do we produce?

There are approximately 800 hectares (2,000 acres) of seed potatoes grown in BC, producing 20,000 tonnes of seed potatoes worth about \$6 million annually.

How are seed potatoes produced?

Seed pieces are sown into carefully prepared soil with the appropriate amount of fertilizer. The grower carries out pest control and hilling operations, and irrigation is supplied to the crop as necessary. Fields must be inspected to ensure that they meet certification standards. The crop is harvested in the fall and stored in special buildings that maintain

seed quality during the winter. Inspectors examine the crop going in and coming out of storage, and issue a phytosanitary certificate to the grower if the crop meets certain standards. This certificate allows growers to ship their product across the border into the United States.

How are seed potatoes used?

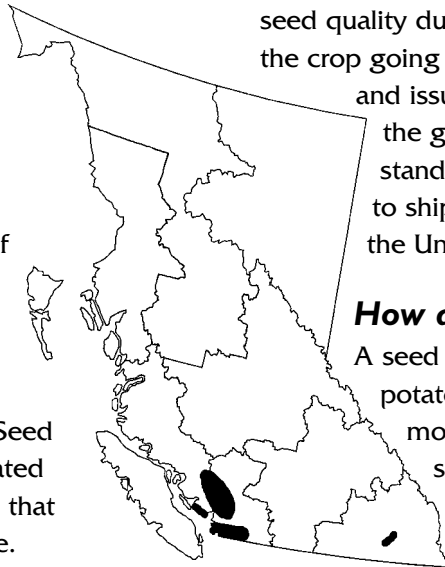
A seed potato is a small potato or a larger potato cut into pieces. While cut seed is more widely used, whole seed is less sensitive to tuber decay. Cut pieces weigh about 202g. Consumers can buy seed potatoes for their home gardens, but the majority of seed potatoes are bought by growers of fresh market and processing potatoes.

What happens after the seed potatoes leave the farm?

The seed is removed from storage in the spring and loaded into large bulk trucks that take the seed to its intended markets in western Canada and the Pacific Northwest. BC exports two-thirds of its crop of seed potatoes to the United States.

What challenges do seed potato producers face?

Because potatoes grown in most places in BC can become infected with virus diseases, special precautions have to be taken. The best way to avoid certain viruses and other diseases is to use special potato seed and maintain good management practices. Seed growers use tissue culture plantlets derived from mother tubers that have been tested and found to be free of diseases. This is the start



of the seed multiplication process that eventually results in the availability of certified seed for regular potato growers.

**Who's involved
in producing seed potatoes?**

- Potato growers/farmers
- Field workers
- Field inspectors
- Agri-business suppliers
- Financiers

Contacts and other resources:

BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Food Production
and Inspection Branch
BC Seed Potato Growers' Association

