

Eyes to see ...

It's Autumn & back in the allotment things are in full swing - good growing conditions & plenty of organic compost & manure, mean that the potatoes I have planted have done really well! I'm going flat out, hoeing, watering and harvesting the crops. Every day yields a worthwhile return for all my hard work.

My dad was a keen gardener & the hours I spent with him as a small boy, digging & planting, were hours of learning & inspiration. My mum loved her flowers & blooms & it was with pleasure that I would pick her a small posy for her to enjoy. Now that I've got my own "patch", how good it felt to give my parents lots of home-grown vegetables as a thank you for all they have done.

My world was turned upside down on learning that my mum had cancer, but it was the garden that brought her peace in her last days. While she spent those last days in hospital, she would ask about the garden & what was happening there. She would lie & day-dream about this place of heaven-on-earth.

And so I go to work with even more determination – to keep this place flourishing & fruitful in her memory. I know that she is looking down at what I'm doing & smiling. Every Christmas I pick flowers from the garden and lay them down in a place called Clumber Park where my parents would take me as a boy. I always say a few words & try not to cry.

When you face sad times, the garden can be your haven. When you face painful times, the garden can be your sanctuary. So what-ever size your garden, what-ever type of garden you have, whether its lawns & flower-beds, whether its plant pots & patio, or whether its vegetable plot & greenhouse, you can grow-your-own peace, pleasure & good "pickings"!



Here are some fun facts you may not have known about potatoes!

- ❖ The potato is the most universally grown crop in the world.

- ❖ The Inca people of Peru were growing potatoes in the Andes Mountains as far back as 200 BC.
- ❖ The Incas used the potato to treat injuries. They also thought it made childbirth easier.
- ❖ Potatoes were introduced to Britain and Ireland in the late 1500s. It didn't go so well at first. Many people blamed them for diseases and condemned them because they weren't mentioned in the Bible.
- ❖ Both Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette wore potato blossoms to spiff up their outfits (partly to boost the crop's popularity in France)!
- ❖ Potatoes were often eaten aboard ships to prevent scurvy because they are loaded with vitamin C.
- ❖ The first "French fry" was allegedly first served in the United States by Thomas Jefferson at a presidential dinner.
- ❖ Potatoes were the first food to be grown in space. In 1996, potato plants were taken into space with the space shuttle Columbia.
- ❖ The world's largest potato was grown in the UK in 2010. It tipped the scales at 3.76 kilograms (8 lb 4 oz) – the weight of a newborn baby!
- ❖ The highest voltage from a potato battery was 538.1 Volt DC achieved in Germany in July 2009.
- ❖ Potatoes are environmentally friendly. They're easy to grow and don't require massive amounts of water, fertilizer or chemicals to thrive.
- ❖ Potatoes are becoming more and more important in the developing world. That's because they're an easy crop to grow. They yield more nutritious food, more quickly and on less land than any other crop.

BUT REMEMBER

Irish Proverb giving words of Wisdom & Advice: "It's easy to halve the potato where there's love!" ...

... and, when you leave a bag of potatoes in the vegetable rack too long, you'll soon find them sprouting "eyes" like crazy. An "eye" is a bud that grows into a new plant. So when planting seed potatoes you can just cut them into pieces with at least one eye each & making sure that the eye is facing upwards. Just think ... while other foods rot, potatoes want to **see!**

What can you see in your garden?