

Smart Stuff

with Twig Walkingstick

Q. Dear Twig: My friend's dad is growing potatoes in old car tires. Why? How?

A. It might seem weird. But, yes, you can grow potatoes in old car tires. It **saves space and reuses trash**. Here's how to do it.

Set an old tire where you want it. Lay it flat.

Get yourself some **seed potatoes**. Cut them in pieces and plant them at the bottom. Plant them either right in the ground or in soil you dump in the circle.

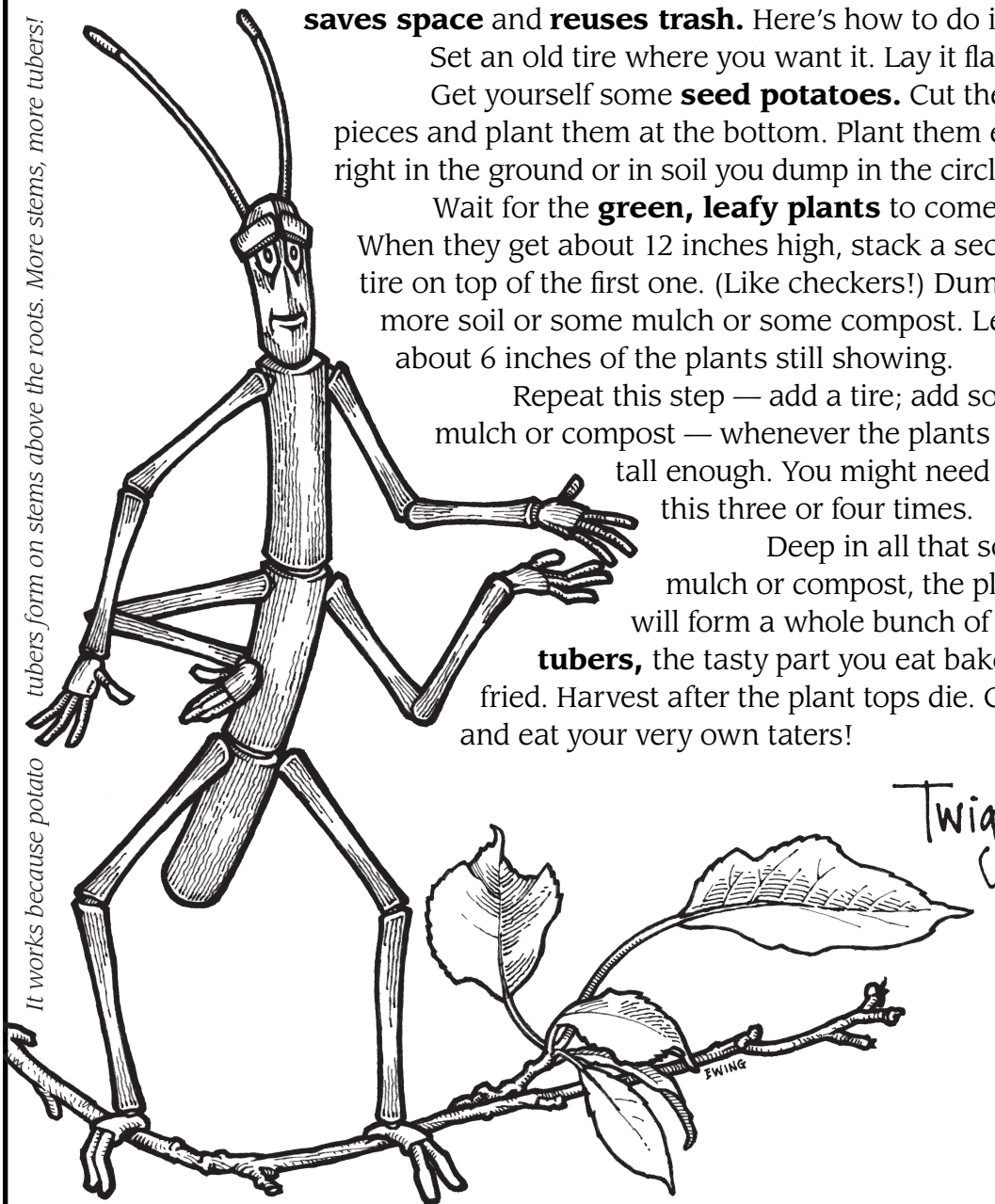
Wait for the **green, leafy plants** to come up. When they get about 12 inches high, stack a second tire on top of the first one. (Like checkers!) Dump in more soil or some mulch or some compost. Leave about 6 inches of the plants still showing.

Repeat this step — add a tire; add soil, mulch or compost — whenever the plants grow tall enough. You might need to do this three or four times.

Deep in all that soil, mulch or compost, the plants will form a whole bunch of **tubers**, the tasty part you eat baked or fried. Harvest after the plant tops die. Cook and eat your very own taters!

tubers form on stems above the roots. More stems, more tubers!

It works because potato



From your scientific friends at The Ohio State University — specifically, the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center (www.oardc.ohio-state.edu) and OSU Extension (extension.osu.edu).

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Notes: Thanks to Mike J. for the tour of his tire/potato research site. Other options, if you can't get old car tires or don't want to use them, include old trash cans and big open cylinders — say, four feet wide and three feet high — made out of old metal fencing. Sources included "Potato Production in the Home Garden," University of Georgia, <http://pubs.caes.uga.edu/caespubs/pubcd/C849.htm/>; and The Good Human, <http://www.thegoodhuman.com/2007/06/18/five-great-ways-to-recycle-or-reuse-old-tires/>.

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