

# Unusual crops to grow

Cut out to make your own seed packet!

## Oca

**Latin name:** Oxalis tuberosa

**Origin:** South America (Andes)

**Plant family:** Oxalidaceae (treat like a potato, related to plants such as Wood sorrel)



A very popular South American potato-like crop also used in New Zealand. Grown in Europe since the 1600's.

### Learning activity: investigate

- Investigate why, in modern times, we eat potatoes and rarely oca
- Research why being dependant on potatoes was a reason for the Irish Potato famine
- Discover how plants overwinter in a tuber. Store in a cool but frost-free place.

### Growing instructions

- Can be grown in a similar way to potatoes.
- Tubers bought from greengrocers will generally produce excellent crops.
- Plant the tubers after risk of frost has passed.
- Plant 30cm apart, as the plants produce a lot of foliage.
- Water well during any spells of dry weather.
- Only harvest after frost has killed off the foliage as the tubers only develop when day length shortens.
- Leave Oca until late October as they develop their tubers very late in the season.

### Growing instructions

<http://www.foodgrowingschools.org/events/world/>  
<http://oca-testbed.blogspot.co.uk>

### Culinary uses

Cook oca like you would a potato and compare the taste, texture and smell. It can be used in stews. See website for Causa a la Oca.



Picture Credit: Garden Organic

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**Background:** Oca (*Oxalis tuberosa*) originated in the Andean Highlands, and was taken to other parts of the world in the 19th century as an alternative to the potato. It is now quite commonly grown in New Zealand but has never really become popular in Europe. It is a frost sensitive tuber crop and the foliage provides good ground cover. Oca tends to have a slightly tangy lemon taste - the flesh is firm but juicy and crisp when eaten raw but becoming more starchy if well cooked. The tubers vary in colour.

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024 7621 7747 | [fgslondon@gardenorganic.org.uk](mailto:fgslondon@gardenorganic.org.uk) |  @foodgrowingschools |  @foodgrowschools