Solanum tuberosum L.  
(Potato) 

- The species *S. tuberosum* has been widely cultivated since the 16th century (for over 7,000 years in South America) and is known regionally by many common names including Andigena, Limeña Potato, Irish Potato, Lumper Potato, Papa, Papa Amarillo, Patata, Purple Potato, Red Potato, Russet Potato, Spud, White Potato, or Yellow Potato to list but a few; *Solanum tuberosum* subsp. *tuberosum* is typically viewed as the conventional Irish Potatoes or White Potatoes; *Solanum tuberosum* L. subsp. *andigenum* (S.V. Juzepczuk & S.M. Bukasov) J.G. Hawkes encompasses the Andean Potatoes or Yellow Potatoes, it and *Solanum tuberosum* L. subsp. *chiloense* (A. DC.) L.I. Kostina are generally recognized as variants within the broader species of *S. tuberosum*; Potatoes are important cool season (warm climates) or warm season (cool climates) crops grown for their starchy tuberous rhizomes that form on below ground stems; thousands of cultivated varieties exist with external colored tuberous rhizomes varying from white, tan, russet, yellow, red, bluish purple to purple; the flesh similarly varies in color from white, yellow, bluish to purple; size of tuberous rhizomes range from small rounded pebble size new potatoes to irregular lumps (lumpers) or cylinders weighing several pounds; tuberous portions of the rhizomes generally begin to form about the time flowering takes place, although flowering is not necessary for tuber formation which is a vegetative process, and completes when above ground stems die back to the soil; in suitable climates, Potatoes may perenniate from the tuberous rhizomes; typically Potatoes are grown as annual crops; the specific epithet of course refers to these tuberous rhizomes. 

- Purportedly the fourth largest food crop in the world, Potatoes are integral to human history, particularly that of the Irish; in the introduction of potato blight fungus (*Phytophthora infestans*) into Europe and Ireland in the early to mid-1840s resulted in massive crop failures and widespread famine that caused millions of deaths and the mass migration of many Irish immigrants to other parts of the world, including the USA; this provided a costly lesson in overreliance on a single genotype or single species of food crop. 

- One might ask why include *S. tuberosum* in a landscape plant materials textbook? With the trend toward edible landscapes, *S. tuberosum* might be included as a filler in suitable portions of the garden where intermediate, 1’ to 3’ tall, dark green foliage and the clusters of small white to light purplish star-shaped 1” diameter flowers could fill a void in the late winter or early spring landscape, and as a bonus provide edible potatoes; the pinnately compound leaves, with seven to fifteen 2” to 3” long leaflets, are dark green; plants are mounding or spreading in habit; occasionally green to yellow small fleshy berry-like fruit resembling the related Tomato develops, but these are not edible as they contain the poison solanine. 

- In addition to potato blight, this species is susceptible to a fair amount of diseases and pests, particularly Colorado potato beetles (*Leptinotarsa decemlineata*) can be damaging to the foliage and require control; only the tuberous rhizomes without green showing should be eaten as green tissues in the tuberous rhizomes and the rest of the plant contain the toxic alkaloid solanine; growth is best in sunny locations with rich, moist, well drained garden soils of loose texture that facilitates lifting or digging of the edible potatoes.

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