



The Four Corners Potato Gazette

Updating Our Partners on Recent Advances



Utah Diné Bikéyah Traditional Foods Program Director Cynthia Wilson (left) and farmers Frances Sheppard, Lucretia Holiday, Brit Tallis, William Edwards, Elouise Wilson, Jasmine Felipe, and Dale Toya with bags of seed potatoes from the 2019 crop, Red Butte Garden, November 2019. Photo courtesy of BJ Nicholls/NHMu.

Farmers Receive Seed Potatoes to Start Operations!

Each of the seven farmers, representing Pueblo and Diné traditions, received 200+ tubers from the 2019 crop to be used to start their own propagation operations in spring 2020. They chose from Newspaper Rock, Bears Ears and Escalante populations that trace back to ancient sources of the potato for native peoples. To assist with their efforts, a detailed guide about growing this species was also provided. It is hoped that a grant application submitted by Utah Diné Bikéyah to the Native American Agricultural Fund will provide funds for supporting commercial operations on Tribal lands.

Harvest!

On a sunny November day we met at Red Butte Garden to harvest 10 experimental troughs and 14 large pots of the Four Corners Potato. All seven farmers, along with garden and

museum staff, pitched in to dig tubers to produce the 2019 crop. A total of 54 pounds were cleaned and dried, about half of what we had hoped.



The same trough before and after the October 9th freeze, which cut the tuber-forming season by a whole month.

There were two reasons for the smaller harvest: First, an unusual mass of frigid air descended from the north on October 9, causing nighttime temperatures to drop to as low as 24° F. This killed the potato plants immediately and shortened the tuber-forming season in the outside troughs by one whole month. Secondly, the potato virus that infected the Mesa Verde strain (see August issue of the *Gazette*) resulted in five troughs that did not produce over the summer. Fortunately, these problems can be readily addressed by moving growing operations farther south (around the Four Corners) and by destroying the infected strain before it can propagate.

Restaurants Receive 2019 Potatoes!

Four of Southern Utah's most prestigious eating and drinking establishments received shares of the 2019 Four Corners Potato crop. Although not enough tubers are available yet for a regular spot on the menu, each establishment will offer the potato in special dishes created for promotional events. For example, Hell's Backbone Grill in Boulder presented 270 patrons of their Thanksgiving feast with the opportunity to taste this highly nutritious, indigenous food. Similarly, North Creek Grill, 4th West Pub (both in Escalante) and Twin Rocks Café (Bluff) are planning their own events to honor this ancient food, thereby creating a new market for indigenous farmers.



Restaurateurs: Tony Jacobsen and Blake Spalding (Hell's Backbone Grill) (left), Melinda Ashley and Bryce (North Creek Grill) (bottom left), Dave Treanor (4th West Pub) (below) and with their first bags of Four Corners Potato.



Four Corners Potatoes a Hit at 2019 Traditional Foods Dinner!

Nine pounds of Four Corners Potato sure go a long way! Used by Chef Karlos Baca as a compliment to his Ute Bison Roulade (along with wild onion, wild mustard and porcini mushroom jus), nearly 300 people were fed at the 3rd annual event. Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez spoke to the crowd and Patrick Willie performed a Hoop Dance.



Questions? Please write Bruce Pavlik (bruce.pavlik@redbutte.utah.edu) or Lisbeth Louderback (lisbeth.louderback@anthro.utah.edu)