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## Maize



Photo credit: James Napier

Maize (also called corn) has only recently become popular as a fodder crop for animals in Ireland and Britain. It does not grow well in very cool temperatures and requires free draining soil. In Britain it is often planted under transparent plastic which increases the temperature around the plant, therefore giving a longer growing season (see Fact file on Protected Cultivation). Compared to barley and wheat, maize is a relatively tall crop.



## Learning Activities

Use the photographs above to identify samples of the plants.

1. State one difference between barley and wheat grain heads.
2. Use the photographs to give two differences between maize and barley.

## Key terms

Crop  
Barley  
Wheat  
Potatoes  
Maize



## Web Resources/Links

[www.ukagriculture.com/crops](http://www.ukagriculture.com/crops)



GCSE

## Agricultural and Land Use Crops (not including grasses)

For first teaching from September 2013

For first award in Summer 2014



agri  
culture  
and  
land use



# FACT FILE



## Learning Outcomes

### Students should be able to:

- Identify a selection of crops (barley, wheat, potato, maize).

## What are crops?

Crops are plants that are grown for the benefit of man. They can be grown as a food source for humans or as a fodder crop for the animals that provide a food source for humans.

Crop (arable) farming may be the main source of income in a particular farm or it may only form part of a farm's activities.

Barley, wheat, potatoes and maize are four of the most important crops grown in Britain and Ireland.



Barley

# agriculture and land use



Credit: James Napier

A ripening field of barley in County Down.

Barley is easily recognised by the long hairs that emerge from the end of each grain. These are known as awns. Barley is primarily grown as animal fodder and as a source of fermentable material for some alcoholic drinks, e.g. beer. It is also used in soups and stews.



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## Wheat

As a young plant wheat looks similar to barley but on maturing it loses its awns.

Wheat is grown for its ripe grains which are ground to make flour for breads, biscuits, breakfast cereal and pasta.



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A comparison between the grain heads of wheat and barley.

## Potatoes



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Potatoes are an easily recognised food crop for both humans and animals. Small potatoes, often called seed potatoes, are sown in spring and the crop is harvested in summer and autumn. The actual edible potato is a swollen tip of an underground stem. A potato is really a storage organ grown by the potato plant as a means of vegetative propagation (reproduction). If left in the ground (and not harvested) each potato will give rise to a new plant. Planting one seed potato can yield 1kg of potato crop.