

ARTICHOKE

This attractive Mediterranean native is a big, coarse, fern-looking plant with a somewhat fountain-like form that grows about 4 feet tall and 6 feet wide. The leaves are silvery green and it forms big flower buds at the top of tall stocks. The flower buds are the parts of the artichoke you cook and eat. Artichokes have tender delicious hearts and leaf bases inside their big round buds. If you do not cut the buds off, they open into spectacular, six-inch purple-blue flowers that can be cut for arrangements. Artichokes are not easy to grow in our area, especially when we have such cold winters and hot summers.

SOIL PREPARATION

Artichokes prefer a sandy soil, rich in organic matter, well drained, and not too heavy. They also need full sun exposure. Before planting, incorporate 1-2 inches of well composted organic matter, Humic, and 1 lb. of all-purpose fertilizer (we recommend "That's all it Takes" complete fertilizer or Happy Frog Organic Tomato & Vegetable Food) per 100 square feet and work them in to a depth of 4-6 inches. Heavy, clay-based soils must be amended with compost and organic matter to encourage and allow for good root development. For best results, add 2-4 inches of a variety of different types of organic matter and 50 lbs. of Zeolite soil conditioner per 100 square feet each fall for multiple years to increase drainage and nutrient availability. By doing this yearly, over time you can create a better growing environment for your garden plants to thrive in and produce. Please consult our Soil Preparation Guide in the attached appendix.

Artichoke Bloom



PLANTING

Start dormant roots in late winter or early spring at least a month before the average date of last frost. Set the roots vertically with the buds or shoots just above soil level. If you are starting from seed, start seeds indoors 8 to 12 weeks before the average date of last spring frost. For seed starting information, see our appendix on "Starting Seeds Indoors". Set transplants outdoors about a month before the last frost (around mid-April). Plants need cool temperatures to set flower buds, but be sure to protect the plants from damaging, freezing weather. Space plants 18 inches apart in the row, with rows 2-3 feet apart. Planting into plastic or fabric mulches will accelerate early growth and encourage higher yields. Water frequently after transplanting to ensure good root and shoot growth. For best results, water immediately after transplanting with Kangaroots rooting solution and again for the first 2-3 waterings. This will prevent transplant shock and give your transplants the best possible opportunity to thrive.

VARIETIES

Green Globe is the most common variety available. It is easy to grow and consistently produces well. Imperial Star and Northern Star are reported to have greater winter hardiness and greater productivity, but are considerably more expensive.

WATERING

Artichoke requires frequent watering during the year, usually about 1-2 inches per week in 2-3 applications. Use drip or soaker irrigation if possible, and mulch heavily around the plants with an organic mulch to help retain soil moisture and to prevent weed emergence. Artichokes have a shallow root system, so be careful when cultivating close to the plant. During warm, dry weather, they are prone to dry out quickly. Don't forget the importance of using mulch around artichoke roots to prevent the soil from rapid drying and moisture loss, and you will see a dramatic increase in your yields.



FERTILIZER

Artichokes are heavy feeders. Aside from a balanced fertilizer when planting like “That’s All it takes”, they do best if given a high nitrogen fertilizer once a month through the growing season. If you prefer, you can use a water soluble fertilizer like Foxfarm Grow Big or Baicor All-Purpose on a weekly basis.

We also recommend treating your artichoke seed or plants with beneficial microbes and mycorrhizae (Kangaroots or Myke). These added helpers bring nutrients and water directly to the plants that host them, making them stronger, more resistant to insects and diseases, and more drought tolerant.

COMMON PROBLEMS

Artichokes generally do not have many problems in our area. A few pests to watch out for are aphids, earwigs, snails and slugs. Hi-Yield Garden Pet & Livestock Dust applied to the soil around the plants will help keep crawling insects from nibbling on your leaves. Aphids can be easily controlled with Ferti-lome Triple Action or Spinosad (Organic) Soap. If you have problems with gophers, voles

or other similar rodents, you may want to consider planting your artichokes in a raised bed lined with chicken wire or try other repellents such as Ferti-lome Mole-Go or Sonic Spikes to reduce the damage done by these pests.

ARTICHOKE	
PLANTING TIME	Group C
PLANTING METHOD	Rows
PLANT SPACING	12-18", (3-4' second year)
ROW SPACING	2-3', (4-6' second year)
SEED DEPTH	1/2"
TIME TO HARVEST	60-70 days first harvest, 90-120 days second
WATER NEEDS	1/2 - 1", 2x weekly
TRANSPLANT/DIRECT SOW	Transplant*
SPECIAL ISSUES	Aphids, Earwigs, Slugs, Gophers, Voles. *First year plants can be harvested, dug up, and stored for next season

HARVEST

Harvest begins in late July or early August and continues until frost. Once the flower buds form, do not stress the plant if possible. Harvest buds when they reach full size, but before the bracts (bud leaves) begin to open. Cut off the bud with 2-3 inches of stem. Continue to water and feed the plants until frost, as they will need to be as healthy as possible to winter over in the ground or to store for planting next season.

FALL CARE/WINTERING OVER

After harvest is complete and after a few light frosts, the leaves should be yellowing and dying back. Cut the leaves back and mulch the roots heavily, at least 3-4 inches. Throw another 4-6 inches of soil over the plants, then cover them again with 8-10 inches of straw, leaves or other composted material. Heavy mulching will allow the roots to overwinter in the garden, but it is not always a fool-proof method. Expect some winter losses in Cache Valley. Another method involves storing the bulbs in a protected, cool location, such as a basement or root cellar. Dig up the roots, allow a few days to cure in a warm dry area, and then store them in a plastic container packed in moist sand, peat moss, or vermiculite to keep the roots from drying out during winter. Before planting again in the spring, divide and trim the roots as necessary.

