



Artichokes

(Globe Artichokes and Jerusalem Artichokes)

GLOBE ARTICHOKE: The globe artichoke is a plant in the sunflower family – related to thistles – native to the Mediterranean region. It is a beautiful shrubby plant, 3 – 5 feet tall and wide. The part that we eat is the immature flower bud. We offer 2-year-old bare root crowns or young plants in containers. Ideally the artichoke should be planted in the fall to receive adequate cold weather, which they require in order to produce flowers. However, the plant must be protected with **Row Cover** or other material during freezing weather below 25°F.

Choose a location in full sun. To prepare existing soil for artichokes, mix in one of our good quality composts, such as **Lady Bug brand Revitalizer**. The resulting blend should be about 50:50 compost and soil. At the same time, mix in **Lady Bug Flower Power** or Rabbit Hill Farm Buds & Blooms fertilizer, and **Lady Bug Glittering Greensand**. **Actino-Iron** may be used instead of greensand as an iron supplement and disease preventative. If you have shallow soil or poor drainage, make a raised bed for your artichokes. Use **Lady Bug Hill Country Garden Mix** or **Rose Soil**, and add all of the amendments listed above except for the compost.

We carry the Improved Green Globe variety of artichoke, which is a good, productive choice for our area. Our bare root artichokes need to be kept moist and planted as soon as they are purchased, whereas you have a little more time with the containerized artichokes. Give each plant a 3 – 5 foot space in which to grow. The crowns should be planted so that the roots are below ground and the dormant stems are above ground. Firm the soil around the crown to make good soil contact. Water thoroughly after planting, and follow with a drench of seaweed or **Lady Bug brand John's Recipe** to get the artichoke started. Seaweed or John's Recipe may be used every week or two to strengthen and feed plants. Add more of the dry fertilizer every 4 – 6 weeks, also, for best production. Water regularly and deeply to keep soil moist, but not soggy.

When plants are 5 – 6 inches tall, add 3 inches of mulch around plants, such as **Lady Bug Sylvan Formula** or **Pine Straw** mulch. Avoid placing mulch on the stem. The plant will grow slowly in the cool season, and then grow rapidly in early spring. With care, each plant can produce six to nine artichokes in April and May. Harvest artichoke flower buds while they are still compact, before the flower begins opening. Cut the stem 2 – 3 inches below the bud. However, allow at least one bud to open, so that you can see and smell the beautiful, thistle-like flower. Artichokes may survive a mild summer here to produce again the next spring, but we often simply pull up the plants whenever they stop producing and begin to suffer from the heat.

JERUSALEM ARTICHOKE (Sunchoke): The Jerusalem Artichoke is a native North American sunflower that produces an edible tuber. The tuber, like a potato, is a modified underground stem. Fresh, it has a texture like a water chestnut. Cooked, it has a nutty flavor and a soft texture like a potato. Unlike the potato, the storage carbohydrate in the sunchoke is inulin, rather than starch. Inulin converts in the body to fructose rather than glucose, which is better tolerated by diabetics. Inulin may be hard to digest for some; try small amounts first.

Sunchokes are easy to grow. Prepare the soil and fertilize the same as you would for Globe Artichokes. Jerusalem artichokes will get 4 – 8 feet tall. They have a tendency to spread from pieces that are inevitably left in the ground after harvest, and might get weedy if not kept in check. Each plant may yield 6 – 12 sunchokes.

We usually have the tubers available in January. Plant each one 3 – 5 inches deep and 1½ - 2 feet apart. Tubers begin to form in summer, but should not be harvested until after frost has killed the top portion of the plant. The tubers are about 4 inches long by 2 or 3 inches wide. Take care when harvesting, so as not to bruise or cut the thin skin of the tubers. Tubers may be as much as a foot deep in the soil. Rinse and pat dry sunchokes and store immediately in the refrigerator. They will keep in the fridge for a couple of months.

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