

## Jerusalem and Globe Artichokes

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Mention artichokes, and most people will conjure up tear-dropped shaped vegetables that appear to be surrounded by leafy armor.

What many people don't realize, is that there are two distinctively different plants with the surname artichoke. The ones found in the produce section of grocery stores are globe artichokes, native to southern Europe, North Africa and the Canary Islands. The other, also a vegetable, is called the Jerusalem artichoke, and it native to the United States.

The Jerusalem artichoke is a member of the same genus as the sunflower. It is a low maintenance perennial that produces two to three inch wide flowers in late summer. The stems of the plants can reach 5 to 12 feet high and have large leaves (4 to ten inches long) with a rough upper surface.

The first written record of Jerusalem artichokes was in 1605 by a European explorer who encountered Native Americans growing the plants along with corn and beans in a Cape Cod garden.

Unlike the globe artichoke, the Jerusalem artichoke is harvested for its below ground tubers. The tubers are part of the root system which can grow as long as 50 inches. Each Jerusalem artichoke can produce up to 200 tubers in one growing season.

As a food source the tubers of the Jerusalem artichoke have a high level of insulin which is a prebiotic fiber with medicinal properties. They can be eaten raw, or they can be mashed, roasted or sautéed, or dried then ground into flour.

Those who take on growing Jerusalem artichokes should be forewarned that they are an aggressively spreading plant which is known to overtake gardens. They should be planted in an area suitable for naturalizing.

The globe artichoke is a member of the thistle family. It grows three to six feet tall and spreads to widths of two to four feet. At maturity, the flower is violet in color. It is a strikingly distinctive plant that can be grown as a food source, to provide structural interest in the landscape or as a pollinator plant for bees.

Rich with the antioxidant vitamin C, the edible portion of the artichoke contains fiber, folate, iron, magnesium and vitamin K. The edible portion of the plant is the flower bud. When harvesting the buds, cut by hand with three to four inches of the stem remaining with the bud.

Best grown in Zones 7 through 10 where it thrives as a perennial plant, the globe artichoke can be grown in Zone 6 as an annual with careful, diligent monitoring throughout the year. The Imperial Star globe artichoke is best suited for this area.

The globe artichoke can be grown from seed or purchased as a young plant at some nurseries and from gardening catalogues.

If growing from seeds, sow them eight to 12 weeks before the last spring frost  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch deep and  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch apart. Soil temperature should be adequate for germination. As the seeds sprout, transplant them into 3-4-inch pots and at the 2-3 leaf stage of maturity place the seedlings in a coldframe or similar structure. Transplant to beds once healthy growth appears.

Fertilize the plants about three times a year. Spread mulch around each plant and if attempting to overwinter the artichokes. Cut the stems and foliage down to soil level, increase the amount of mulch at the end of the season and surround the plants with protective coverings.

