

URBAN FARMER

LOVE THE EARTH

From Seed to Harvest: A beginner's guide to growing artichokes

Seeing the large globe of an artichoke and imagining growing the edible beast in a garden may seem intimidating, but artichokes can be an easy and striking addition with the ability to grow almost anywhere in the United States. Depending on climate, some artichoke plants may return as perennials.



Green Globe Artichoke seeds
available at ufseeds.com

To plant:

Artichoke seeds can be started in February in a greenhouse or under a fluorescent light, planted about 1/4-inch deep in 4-inch containers. Artichokes are known as tap-rooted plants, which means their roots grow deep, even as seedlings. Be sure to plant the seeds in a deep container. Transport seedlings to the garden 8 to 10 weeks later, but be sure the danger of frost has passed. By then, the transplant should be nearing 10 inches in height. Plant the seedlings four feet or more apart as the plants grow large. Before planting in the garden, add compost to the soil.

Artichokes require vernalization, which is a process where the plant experiences cooler

temperatures such as below 50 degrees, for a few weeks, in order to accelerate flowering. However, the plant is frost sensitive, so plant after frost dates but before spring temperatures rise.

To grow:

Artichokes require nutrient-rich soil, so be sure to fertilize with fish emulsion. Artichokes can reach a height of five to six feet tall and up to five feet wide, so be sure there is plenty of space for the plant to grow. Often times, artichokes do not grow true to their seed name, and gardeners will have better luck purchasing artichoke seed rather than harvesting from their own plant. Keep the artichoke bed free of weeds and add a multi-inch layer of mulch around the plants to reduce weed growth. Not many animals eat artichoke plants, though beware of slugs and aphids.

To harvest:

Harvest buds measuring at least three inches across while the bud is still closed. The more a bud opens, it becomes bitter, and fully open buds are inedible. To harvest, cut a couple of inches of the bud's stem to easily handle the bud. Lower buds won't grow as large as the top ones. When all buds have been harvested, cut the entire plant back by a third to encourage future growth. Store artichokes in the refrigerator.

What an artichoke craves:

Artichoke plants thrive and set their best buds in full sun, but in warmer climates, the plant can tolerate partial shade. Artichokes grow best in a soil pH of 6.0 to 7.0. Artichokes require well-drained soil, as well as soil with a good amount of organic matter. If garden soil is of poor quality, plant the artichokes in raised beds.



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Where to buy artichoke seeds:

Urban Farmer sells different varieties of artichokes that you can find at ufseeds.com!



Purple Italian Globe Artichoke seeds available at ufseeds.com



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