



GROWING *edibles* IN PERTH

How To Grow Artichokes

If you are looking for unusual vegetables that are easy to grow in a Mediterranean climate and that also make great feature plants in the garden then artichokes are a great choice. There are two vegetables referred to as artichokes. The Jerusalem Artichoke is a type of sunflower and the tuber is eaten. The Globe Artichoke is part of the daisy family and the flower bud of the plant is eaten.

Jerusalem Artichokes

The Jerusalem Artichoke (*Helianthus tuberosus*) is a hardy, tall, herbaceous perennial that grows up to 3 m high with a yellow flower like a sunflower. It is easy to grow, requires very little maintenance and is perfect for beginners. It will grow in any soil but prefers light, sandy soil with lots of organic matter.

The plants like a sunny position and the flowers make a showy feature in a garden bed. The attractive flowers can be used as a 'cut flower' in the house. Removing the flowers is believed to increase the yield of tubers. This plant is also a useful summer windbreak for the vegetable garden.

Best grown from tubers, they can be planted in spring as the soil starts to warm. The plant will die down in winter and that is when the edible tubers are ready to harvest. The tubers should be scrubbed, not peeled, and can be boiled or baked. The flavour is slightly nutty and earthy. Long slow cooking intensifies their sweet flavour as they caramelize. So they make a perfect roasted vegetable. They are described as a cross between a really tasty potato and a Globe Artichoke. When very fresh, they can be grated raw in salads.

Globe Artichokes

Strange as it may seem, the Globe Artichoke (*Cynara scolymus*) is no relation and is, in fact, a perennial thistle. A member of the Asteraceae family, it can be a stately feature in the garden. The attractive grey green foliage reaches 1 – 1.5m with the flower bud the edible part of the plant. The buds can be green, bronze or purple, depending on the variety.

They can be planted from seed or seedlings in sunny positions. They can also be grown from tubers or divisions from mature plants. They enjoy a bit of space to grow into and benefit from free draining, well prepared soil. If not picked, the flower bud will turn into a striking purple flower that makes an unusual addition to a floral arrangement.

The plant can take six months to a year to produce flower buds ready for eating, but they are worth the wait. The flower stem is cut just below the immature bud. The Globe is trimmed top and bottom before going into a stainless steel pot and boiled for about 30 minutes. Often considered fiddly to eat, the fleshy part of the bract is delicious. It can be dipped into lemon or garlic infused butter, or drizzled with a vinaigrette. The heart can be lightly pickled and served with olives, sundried tomatoes and cured meats for a tasty antipasto platter.

This is intended as general information only. Please ask one of our horticulturists for specific advice for your situation.