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# How to Grow Artichoke Plants: The Complete Guide



Photo Credit: Pixabay

Botanical name: *Cynara cardunculus* var. *scolymus*

Plant type: Vegetable

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# Planting, Growing, and Harvesting Artichokes

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The globe artichoke is a perennial in the  
thistle family that produces long, lobed  
silver-green leaves that make the arti-  
choke look like a giant fern. Learn how to  
plant and grow edible artichokes in  
your garden!

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## About Artichokes

The buds (i.e., the “artichokes” that we  
harvest and eat), if allowed to flower, are  
thistle-like and violet. These large plants  
can be grown in rows in the garden, as in-  
formal hedges, or planted as a wide  
border. Artichokes can reach heights of 3

Artichokes prefer cool, humid summers and mild winters. In cool regions, plan to treat the artichoke as an annual.

One plant will produce many artichokes. The biggest bud grows on the top of the plant, and many smaller ones grow beneath.

#### ADVERTISEMENT



*Even if you don't like to eat artichokes, they're still worth growing for*

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## PLANTING

Choose a spot in the garden that gets full sun (at least 6-8 hours of direct sunlight per day).

Artichokes are heavy feeders. Before planting each plant, mix a shovel of compost or [aged manure](#) into the soil. They require consistent moisture but do not like waterlogged soil.

### When to Plant Artichokes

- Artichokes can be started from seeds, from rooted shoots taken from growing plants, or from dormant roots.
- If starting from seeds:
  - Start seeds indoors in late winter or early spring, about 8-10 weeks be-

- Soak the seeds in warm water before sowing in trays or pots.
- Place the trays or pots in a warm spot with bright light.
- Keep the soil moist.
- Plant seedlings and shoots in the garden in the spring after the last spring frost.
- Dormant roots can be planted in the fall or winter in frost-free regions. In cooler climates, plant the roots in the spring after the last frost.

## How to Plant Artichoke

- Space each plant 3 to 4 feet apart in rows and leave 4 to 5 feet between the rows.
- Plant the shoots and dormant roots about 6 inches deep. The tops should be above ground level.
- Water deeply at the time of planting.

## GROWING

- Keep the soil moist. Artichokes need lots of water to form the edible buds.

<https://www.almanac.com/plant/artichokes>

- Apply a balanced organic fertilizer once every month during the growing season.
- Remove the mulch when the plants begin to bud and cover the soil around the plants with compost.
- Artichoke plants will go dormant in hot weather.
- When temperatures cool off in late summer and fall, the plants will start growing again and you may get a second harvest.
- In cooler regions, after the fall harvest, cut the plants back to about 6 inches and cover the crowns of the plant with leaves.
- For extra winter protection, add an additional foot of straw on top.
- Remove the straw and leaves after the last frost in the spring.



## How to Propagate Artichokes

- Select shoots from an established plant that produced well the previous year.
- Remove shoots in the spring when they are about 8 inches high.
- Cut the shoot off below the soil, at the point where it is attached to the mother plant at the root ball.
- Carefully pull the roots that are attached to the shoot from the root ball.
- Plant the shoot in a new spot or share with friends!

## Varieties

- **‘Green Globe’** matures early and is a good choice for northern gardeners. This variety can be grown as an annual.
- **‘Violetto’** produces purple slightly elongated buds. Best grown as a perennial.
- **‘Imperial Star’** has tasty round buds that mature early. It is an annual and will produce well-developed artichokes the first year from seed. Plants



- **‘Emerald’** has thornless buds and is very productive. It grows glossy, deep green buds on 4 to 5 feet tall plants. Grow it as a perennial in Zones 7 and above.

## HARVESTING

- Harvest artichoke buds when they have swelled but are still closed tight.
- Use a sharp knife to cut across the stem about 1 to 2 inches below the bud.

## How to Store Artichokes

- Sprinkle fresh artichokes with water and put them in a plastic bag. The artichokes can be stored in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks.
- To freeze artichoke hearts, first blanch the hearts in boiling water and a splash of lemon juice for 1-2 minutes. Cool and dry the hearts before putting them in plastic freezer bags.

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PESTS/DISEASES

Artichoke Pests and Diseases

Pest/Disease	Type	Symptoms	Control/Prevention
<u>Aphids</u>	Insect	Misshapen/yellow leaves; distorted flowers; leaf drop; sticky “honeydew” (excretion) on leaves; sooty, black mold	Knock off with water spray; apply insecticidal soap; inspect new plants carefully; use slow-release fertilizers; avoid excess nitrogen; encourage lacewings, lady beetles/bugs, spiders

Pest/Disease	Type	Symptoms	Control/Prevention
<b>Bacterial crown rot</b>	Bacteria	Slow growth; leaves wilt; crown rots	Use clean tools; start plants from disease-free transplants
<b><u>Botrytis (gray mold)</u></b>	Fungus	Varies; yellow/brown/gray spots with water-soaked margins on leaves/flowers; gray mold; buds remain closed; stem lesions; wilt/rot; scorched appearance ("fire") in some plants	Destroy infected parts/severely infected plants (do not compost); remove plant debris regularly; disinfect tools; good air circulation/sunlight; avoid overhead watering; prevent plant stress/injury; weed; rotation
<b>Cabbage loopers</b>	Insect	Large, ragged holes in leaves from larval feeding; defoliation; stunted or bored heads; excrement	Handpick; add native plants to invite beneficial insects; spray larvae with insecticidal soap or <i>Bacillus thuringiensis</i> (Bt); use row covers; remove plant debris
<b><u>Flea beetles</u></b>	Insect	Numerous tiny holes in leaves	Use row covers; mulch heavily; add native plants to in-

Pest/Disease	Type	Symptoms	Control/Prevention
<u><a href="#">Powdery mildew</a></u>	Fungus	Varies; white spots or flourlike coating on upper leaf surfaces; leaves drop; distortion/stunting	Destroy infected parts (do not compost); remove plant debris regularly; resistant varieties; good air circulation/sunlight; spray plants with solution of 1 teaspoon baking soda/1 quart water; prevent plant stress; avoid overhead watering
<u><a href="#">Slugs/snails</a></u>	Mollusk	Irregular holes in leaves/buds; gouged buds; slimy secretion on plants/soil; seedlings “disappear”	Handpick; avoid thick bark mulch; use copper plant collars; avoid overhead watering; lay boards on soil in evening, in morning lift and dispose of pests in hot, soapy water; drown in deep container of 1/2 inch of beer or of sugar water and yeast sunk to ground level; apply 1-inch-wide strip of di-

Pest/Disease	Type	Symptoms	Control/Prevention
Spider mites	Insect	Fine webs; yellow-specked under-side of leaves, later brown-edged or bronze or yellow leaves; leaf drop	Rinse plants with water, mist daily; apply insecticidal soap

## WIT AND WISDOM

- Historians believe that the first artichokes were grown in Sicily or North Africa.
- In A.D. 77, the Roman naturalist Pliny called the artichoke one of earth’s monstrosities.
- Wealthy Romans enjoyed artichokes prepared in honey and vinegar, seasoned with cumin.
- In the U.S., artichokes were first grown in Louisiana in the early 19th century. The vegetable was brought there by French and Spanish settlers.

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## COOKING NOTES

Artichokes are delicious raw or cooked.  
They can also be pickled or canned.

Before cooking, slice off the bottom of the stem and any tough outer leaves. Cut off about 1 inch of the spiky top of the artichoke.

Steam artichokes, don't boil them.  
Steaming cooks them with just the right amount of moisture.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### Catherine Boeckmann

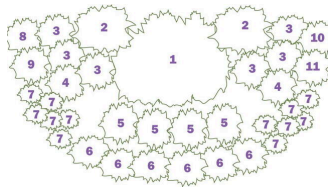


Catherine Boeckmann loves nature, stargazing, and gardening so it's not surprising that she and The Old Farmer's Almanac found each other. She leads digital content for the Almanac website, and is also a certified master gardener in the state of Indiana. [Read More from Catherine Boeckmann](#)

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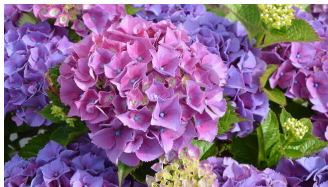
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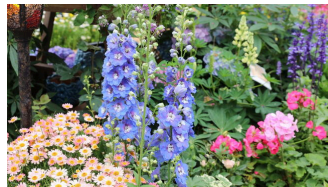
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COMMENTS

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Shelly Domenici (not verified)

1 month 1



Hi , I have a question about my artichoke plant that I grew from a seed last spring/summer . I didn't do any research on them so it produced a few artichokes. All my other one died this one survived through this winter in 9b zone and is now producing small artichokes the problem is most of the stocks on the mother plant have broken not all the way off can I cut them off and reroot them since they will have no roots? Please help I don't want to loose my plant

Thank You

Shelly D.

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REPLY

**Catherine.Boeckmann (not verified)** 1 month 1 week ago

With artichokes, you can replant a shoot! Gently clear away some soil to reveal the plant's roots. Using a sharp knife, cut off the shoots along with their roots. Ensure the shoots are at least eight inches in length. Finally, backfill the soil around the original plant and firm up with your hands.

REPLY

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**Jill G Beck (not verified)** 6 months 2 weeks

ago

I live in Illinois, zone 7a. Last year I did what you said, I cut back my artichoke plants in late October and then covered them with about 12 inches of leaf mulch. It seems that IL did have a fairly wet winter with alot of snow. When I uncovered the artichokes in the spring, they were just a mushy mess. Everyone of them had the roots rotted. I replanted last spring and am now ready to winterize once again but am afraid to use the same method. What did I do wrong? In fact the same thing happened to my raspberry bushes and strawberries. Could you please give me suggestions? Thank you.

REPLY

**The Editors** 6 months 2 weeks ago

Hi Jill,

Sorry to hear about your artichokes.

although it is definitely possible to overwinter them. If your wet winter (snow and rain) was also accompanied by periods of thawing and freezing, it may not have mattered how well protected your artichoke crowns and roots were because that excessive moisture making its way into the ground followed by colder freezing temperatures is a recipe for disaster.

You can certainly try to protect them inground again this year. Another way of doing it is to make a 2-foot-tall cage out of chicken wire (secured to the ground) that is 12 inches wider than the plant and fill it completely with leaves and straw. The cage will keep the leaves and straw in place. Some even recommend adding extra soil on top of the plants prior to mulching with leaves and straw.

An alternative is to dig up the crowns and roots, remove as much soil as possible and store for the winter in a

Also, if you find yourself needing to plant new artichokes next year or in the future, consider planting varieties like Green Globe or Imperial Star, which have shorter growing seasons and are more hardy.

Hope this helps!

**REPLY**

---

**Stephanie (not verified)** 10 months 1 week ago

How much do you cut them back in the summer? I live in zone 9b ( it's in the 100's now) and my plant is done producing and looking very ugly now.

**REPLY**

**The Editors** 10 months 1 week ago

Hi Stephanie, Artichoke is a perennial plant. Summer eat ends the harvest, toughens the edible parts and causes

(foliage and stems) to the soil level.

You can either cover with mulch to initiate summer dormancy or allow the ornamental flower buds to form. Stop watering until early fall when the plant sends out new shoots in the fall. (You can stimulate a light crop in the fall by working compost into the soil around plants as growth resumes in cool weather.) If you wish, you can transplant new shoots into a new location in the garden or just leave them place to produce another year. Make sure you leave only the most vigorous shoot on the old plant for growth in the spring.

**REPLY**

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**Kate Corral (not verified)** 11 months 1 week ago

This year my artichokes are small and opening up completely too early.

**REPLY**

**Cathy (not verified)** 1 year ago

Last year my artichokes were green. This year they are purple... the plant is healthy and the globes look healthy. Are they still okay?

**REPLY**

**The Editors** 1 year ago

Hi Cathy,

If the plant and globes look healthy they should still be fine. Depending on your growing conditions this winter, if temperatures dip to below freezing it can change the look of the artichokes to a brown or even purple color.

**REPLY**

**Michele (not verified)** 2 years 9 months ago

Why are ants all over my artichokes? They don't seem to be eating them but there are a

REPLY

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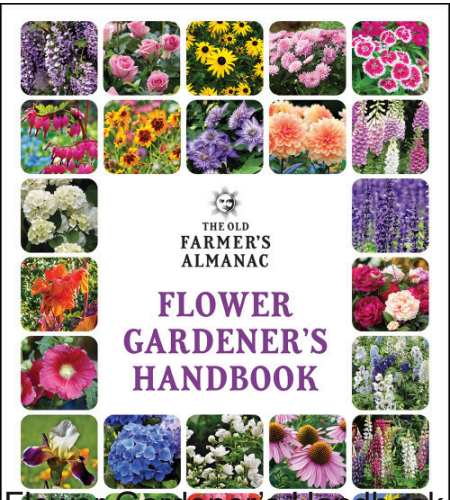
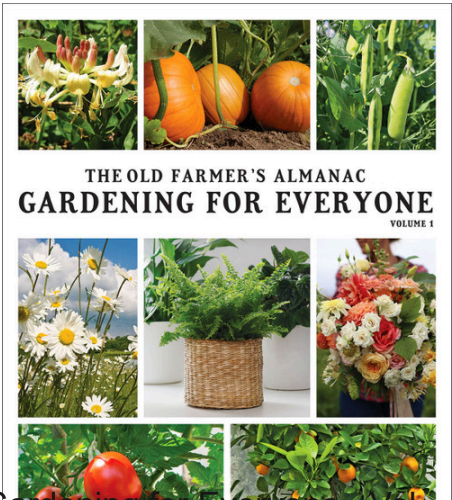
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