



Artichokes serve a dual purpose in the garden

By Rose Bonar, UCCE Master Gardener

Artichokes are a vegetable that is native to the mild climates of the Southern Mediterranean. Because of that, they grow well in the San Joaquin Valley where we also have a Mediterranean climate. They are half-hardy perennial thistles that are easily killed by temperatures below 20 degrees Fahrenheit. The edible plant parts are inside the immature flower bud and at the base of each scale.

But artichokes aren't JUST a tasty vegetable that's delicious when dipped in butter. Artichokes are an interesting and unusual-looking plant that can also be used in the landscape. If not harvested, the artichoke will develop into a large, light purple flower that looks like a thistle. The ornamental artichoke plant can be planted in a mass planting, or used here and there in your landscape for interesting textural and color contrast to other garden plants. There is a restaurant/deli just north of Cambria that uses hundreds of artichokes in the landscape. Then they harvest them to use on their menu for lunch!

How to grow artichokes:

Artichokes can be grown as either an annual or a perennial. Annuals are planted every year; perennials only need to be replanted every 2-4 years. In our zone, the winters are usually mild enough that any artichoke can be grown as a perennial, however, remember that in case of freezing weather, the plant might need to be covered.

Growing annual artichokes from seeds started in late winter will produce edible buds in midsummer and fall. Annual varieties include Green Globe and Imperial Star. Perennial artichokes grown from seed usually will not produce heads in its first year. For that reason, transplants are preferred.



According to our Vegetable Planting Guide for San Joaquin Valley Gardens (available for download at: http://ucanr.edu/sites/UC_Master_Gardeners/Local_Gardening_Articles_-_Info/Vegetable_Gardening/), artichokes can be started from seed indoors in March, and transplanted into the garden in July or August.

- Days to germination: 7 to 20 days
- Days to harvest: depends on perennial vs. annual types
- Light requirements: Full sun
- Water requirements: Frequent watering, but avoid soil saturation, especially around the crown
- Soil: Well-drained and fertile
- Container: Suitable in large containers
- Plant about 3 feet apart on raised beds to avoid root rot
- Feed during midsummer with a commercial fertilizer or a top dressing of compost
- Water regularly and mulch to keep weeds down and preserve moisture.

Artichokes thrive in full sun to partial shade. They also need light, fertile, well-drained soil—sandy or loam is ideal. Two reasons artichoke plants fail are summer drought and winter soil that's waterlogged. Adding compost will improve the soil's ability to retain water in summer and to drain in winter.

Harvest buds while they're tight and firm, and hopefully at least 3 inches in diameter; if buds begin to open, they lose their tenderness. When you have harvested all buds on a stem, cut the stem to the ground.

To prepare for overwintering, cut plants back to ground level or slightly below ground level after fall harvest. Cover with 3 to 4 inches of an organic mulch to cover the stem and roots.

For more information about artichokes go to our website.

<http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/GARDEN/VEGES/artichokes.html>

Do you love to garden? Do you have spare time? Do you want to learn more about gardening and help others in the community? If so, why not become a Master Gardener? You can find out more about our upcoming training class in January by logging on to our website

[http://ucanr.edu/sites/UC Master Gardeners/](http://ucanr.edu/sites/UC_Master_Gardeners/), then click on Become a Master Gardener OR by calling Sue Gillison, Program Coordinator, at 559-684-3300

For answers to all your home gardening questions, call the Master Gardeners in Tulare County at (559) 684-3325, Tuesdays and Thursdays between 9:30 and 11:30 am; or Kings County at (559) 852-2736, Thursday Only, 9:30-11:30 a.m; or visit our website to search past articles, find links to UC gardening information, or email us with your questions: http://ucanr.edu/sites/UC_Master_Gardeners/

August 12, 2017