

Artichoke

The buzz these days is all about “edible landscape”. The Artichoke is not only a delight to eat, but is a beautiful and dramatic specimen for the garden. Artichoke plants can live up to fifteen years in ideal conditions. The striking silvery green leaves grow from the center of the plant in a fountain-like shape. The flower buds are actually the Artichokes one eats; you can also let the plant bloom and enjoy the striking thistle like flowers.

Size: They can grow to 4’ tall at 6’ -8’ wide, but much smaller in hotter areas.

Exposure: Full sun - if temperatures are over 85, give them a little shade.

How to Plant: Plant in full sun to partial shade from dormant roots or containers in winter or early spring.

Fertilize: Fertilize with a high potassium fertilizer (often called a high potash) during periods of active growth to encourage flower set.

Propagation: Can be propagated by root division, but I suggest purchasing divisions or potted plants.

Water needs: Water regularly, but this plant can take some drought. Test soil by putting your finger in the soil; if it is dry at 1”, then water.

Soil: Well drained, deep, rich soil is best. It is ideal to dig down 18” and amend the soil with organic matter, or make a raised bed.

Snapshot: Artichokes grow best in mild winters and summers. They like the cool and foggy coastal areas best, but we can grow them successfully in the foothills. They are dependable in zones 8-9 through 14-24. In zones 4-7 give them a try and see what happens. Make sure to heavily mulch around the plants but keep mulch 6” away from base. When cold weather arrives, tie the plant up and mulch heavily. Harvest Artichokes when small by cutting 3” – 4” below the bud. Golden Globe is a popular California variety, but Imperial Star and Violetto are growing in popularity.

Novella Springer

Calaveras Master Gardener

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