

## Growing Artichokes in the PNW

Artichokes are considered annual plants, which means that they go through their life cycle (seed, plant, fruit) in one season and then die. However, it's usually mild enough to grow these edible thistles as perennials (come back the following year) in western Washington if the main stem is cut back and the crown of the plant is mulched in the winter with leaves or straw. If you don't mulch in winter, temperatures lower than 25F will kill it. An artichoke plant will produce well for about three or four years. After that, dig and divide it as it produces off-shoot plants that may crowd the original plant.

To prepare your garden in spring before planting, work well-composted manure or compost into the first few inches of soil. At planting, broadcast (sprinkle evenly) a balanced vegetable fertilizer (E.g. 16-16-16, 10-10-10) according to package directions.

Plant artichoke starts in loose, well-amended soil in full sun. Space them 3 to 5 feet apart. When planning your garden, remember that artichokes are tall plants, and may shade parts of your garden. Water and mulch regularly. Mulching helps the soil retain moisture, keeps down weeds, regulates soil temperature, and enriches the soil. 1-2 inches of grass clippings works well.

About 6 weeks after planting, side dress your artichoke nitrogen only (e.g. fish meal, blood meal, or a balanced fertilizer with a higher 1st number, E.g. 10-5-5 or 16-6-4). Read and follow the package instructions when applying fertilizer. Side dressing means to dig a 2-4 inch trench about 4 inches from the plant's stem, add recommended amount of fertilizer, and cover with soil.

By mid-summer, the artichoke plant should send up flower buds. To eat the buds, harvest them before they open. If left to flower, the plant will produce a large purple thistle that can be dried and used in arrangements, but is inedible. If you harvest all the heads, the artichokes may send up a second crop in the fall.

This growing guide is provided by the WSU Extension Master Gardeners of Cowlitz County.

Please call our FREE Plant and Insect Clinic 360-577-3014 Ext. 8 to help you with any questions you may have with your garden. You may also submit questions and images on our website: [cowlitzcomg.com/plant-and-insect-clinic](http://cowlitzcomg.com/plant-and-insect-clinic)

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