

Jerusalem Artichoke *Planting & Growing Guide*

Cultural Requirements The Jerusalem artichoke, (*Helianthus tuberosus* L.), also known as sunchoke, is a species of sunflower with edible tubers. This perennial plant can grow in excess of five feet tall and is often planted as an ornamental for its small yellow flowers. The tubers taste like water chestnut and can be used fresh in salads or cooked like potatoes. Tubers appear similar to ginger root, and the flesh can vary in color from white to red. The seeds from the flowers are edible as well, but smaller than your normal sunflower seed.

Jerusalem artichokes shouldn't be confused with globe artichokes, which produce an edible globular flower.

Jerusalem artichokes are hardy plants that prefer cooler climates, and can grow well in poor soil. For best results plant in porous soil with good drainage in a spot with lots of sunlight. Because any tubers left in the soil over winter will produce new plants in spring, Jerusalem artichokes can be invasive and may take over large areas. For this reason many gardeners recommend planting them away from other garden beds, maybe by a fence or next to a building, or in a raised bed of their own.

The tuber's principal carbohydrate element is inulin, which converts to fructose in the digestive tract (as opposed to glucose), and therefore is better tolerated by diabetics. Its low starch content also makes it a good choice for someone on a low-starch diet.

Planting & Growing Instructions Plant tubers in late winter or early spring, as soon as the soil can be worked. Later planting results in smaller yields. Add a balanced fertilizer, high in Phosphorus, like a bulb or flower blend. Before planting, cut tubers into one to two ounce pieces, with two or three prominent buds. Don't let the pieces dry out before planting. Small tubers can be planted without cutting. Plant the tubers 12 to 24 inches apart and cover them with 3 to 5 inches of soil.

Jerusalem artichokes don't need a lot of care during the season. Weed around the young plants and soon they will shade out any weeds themselves. Water like you would a sunflower if you don't get summer rain.

Harvesting Harvest your crop after the first frost or when the flowers start to die back. Cut the tops and dig out the tubers. A hand rake makes this job easier. Tubers dug later in the season are sweeter but have less inulin. You can leave tubers in the ground and harvest as needed, but be sure to harvest all the tubers before spring to avoid unwanted "volunteers". If you have young plants come up that you don't want, destroy them before they can set tubers.

Storage After harvest, scrub the tubers with a vegetable brush. There is no need to peel them. They should be stored in high humidity at a temperature close to 32°. In these conditions the tubers can be stored for several months.

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