

Bobbett's Naturally Grown



Growing Jerusalem Artichoke

The Jerusalem Artichoke, (*Helianthus tuberosus* L.), also known as sunchoke, can be produced throughout the United States. However, the plant is better adapted to the northern two-thirds of the country than the southern third. Jerusalem artichokes are also often used for pickling purposes. The fresh tuber tastes like a water chestnut and is used in salads (raw). Tubers can also be cooked like potatoes.

**I for 6-8 weeks and then plant out. You want to simulate the tubers having gone through a cold winter to stimulate Spring growth. Tubers BOUGHT in the Spring will already have been through the cold process, so these can you can plant out immediately.

The edible portion of this member of the sunflower family is the tuber or swollen end of an underground stem, which in some respects resembles a potato. However, unlike most starchy vegetables, the principal storage carbohydrate in sunchoke immediately after harvest is inulin rather than starch. When consumed the inulin is converted in the digestive tract to fructose rather than glucose, which can be tolerated by diabetics.

Fertilizer (this info comes off the web):

Generally it is suggested that 500 to 700 lb per acre of 6-12-6 be broadcast in the row. This rate may be increased on soils low in natural fertility.

Planting

Whole tubers or pieces of tubers that are no less than two ounces and have two or three prominent buds should be planted. Smaller seed pieces will reduce yields but larger seed pieces (over 2 oz) will not significantly increase them. Do not allow cut seed pieces to dry before planting. Plant 3 to 5 inches deep, in rows 36 to 42 inches wide with 15 to 24 inches between plants.

** I put my rows about 8" apart and don't leave much more than 8" between plants. If your soil is super rich, soft, and loamy, then give them 12" between rows since the tubers will naturally spread out.

Cultural Management

Cultivate shallowly and only as needed to control grass and weeds as the planting is being established. During plant establishment, grass and weed problems will be reduced by shading since plants grow over 6 ft high. Tubers begin to form in August and may become 4 inches long and 2 to 3 inches in diameter.

** I don't cultivate at all; I'm a no-till farmer/gardener. If there is too much weed competition in the Spring, I just mulch over the bed with grass clippings, hay, straw, etc. By the way, after several years of growing them here my plants are now reaching the 10-12' height!

Harvesting

The crop is generally not harvested until after frost, but if your area doesn't get frost, then harvest after flowers appear or as the plants start dying back.. Tubers dug later in the season are sweeter but have less inulin. Depending on the soil I either pull up the plants with their roots or dig around them carefully with a garden fork. Tubers will be directly under the plants, mostly hanging on long roots, but you will also find wanderers several inches away.

Handling and Storage

The skin of Jerusalem artichokes is very thin. Care should be taken in handling to avoid skinning, cuts and bruises. The skin is also susceptible to rapid moisture loss so the crop should be put in storage immediately after harvest. Cold storage facilities should have high humidity (85 to 95% relative humidity) and a temperature near 32 F. Under these conditions, tubers can be kept for several months.

**We keep ours in ziplock bags with a moistened paper towel for several weeks in the frig with no problems. We also just leave them in the ground over winter and dig as needed for eating.

Precaution

The Jerusalem artichoke is a very strong growing perennial and can become invasive. Since it is nearly impossible to harvest all the tubers in a field or garden, there will be a large number of volunteer plants the following spring. Put them in a permanent location and somewhere they can either wander at will or you can keep them under control. Pots and raised beds are helpful. We grow ours away from my main garden in an area where we continually mow around the perimeter to keep any unwanted plants from taking over.

I hope this information is helpful.

Information provided courtesy of:

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