



JERUSALEM ARTICHOKE

Background: Jerusalem artichoke strains vary by skin color, root shape, height and maturation time. We are growing J.A. - Passamaquoddy Potatoes (Red/purple skinned, from Grand Manan) and J.A. – Skorospelka (from a Soviet breeding program for compact tuber set and smooth tubers, rose/purple skin and white flesh). Native to central North America and often called “sunchokes” — they are so prolific they can become invasive, but if handled properly, they will be a productive and rewarding crop. The edible parts of these plants are their knobby roots, which have a crisp texture like that of water chestnuts. When cooked, they become a soft, nutty alternative to potatoes. . .

Growing: A hardy, widely adapted perennial, a relative of the sunflower, Jerusalem artichokes grow best in well-drained soil with a near-neutral pH of about 7.0. Locate your crop in full sun but behind smaller vegetables, because the 10-foot-tall plants cast ample afternoon shade. Plant small seed tubers 4 to 5 inches deep and 16 inches apart. Try planting a few pole beans on the sunny side of your Jerusalem artichokes. The beans will use the sturdy Jerusalem artichoke stems as a living trellis. Plant early spring after a spring harvest, and replant in the autumn after a Fall harvest. When the plants are about a foot tall, mulch well to help retain soil moisture. Missed roots while harvesting will usually grow in the spring, any outside the bed can be pulled up along with the root. If the weather is dry in early fall, give your Jerusalem artichokes deep drenching to increase tuber size. Jerusalem artichokes have no trouble tolerating light insect feeding, and the plants are seldom bothered by diseases.

.. **Harvesting:** Using a digging fork, start at one end of the bed and work your way across, feeling for tubers with your fingers. Tubers can sometimes be hiding a foot deep. Harvesting can continue through winter as long as the ground isn't frozen. In very cold climates, harvesting can continue in spring. Rinse and pat dry harvested tubers before storing them in a refrigerator or cool root cellar. Jerusalem artichokes will keep in the fridge for a couple of months.

Using: Jerusalem artichokes get their sweetness from a unique sugar called inulin, which the body metabolizes much more slowly than it does other sugars. This makes the veggie a preferred food for diabetics, and for anyone who wants to avoid eating simple sugars and starches. Jerusalem artichokes are rich in iron, potassium and a range of B vitamins. The inulin can cause abdominal gas eaten in large amounts. They are great eaten fresh, raw in salads etc. They are not easy to peel as they tend to be 'knobby', scrub well under water. Alternatively, cook as potatoes but add a small amount of vinegar or lemon juice to the water as the iron in the artichokes discolors the white flesh when cooked.