



ask

Celebrating 20 Years!
the landscape professional
 Linda K. Lillie of Sprigs & Twigs

Welcome to my weekly series!

Email or mail your questions to: info@sprigsandtwigs.net or
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Thank you Readers for Voting Sprigs & Twigs
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Question this Week: *I was visiting the Florence Griswold Museum in Old Lyme last weekend and in one of their gardens they had this beautiful flowering plant. What in the world is it? Thanks! Claire*

Linda's Answer:

Hi Claire, that is a great question. What you took a picture of is a plant that has been around since Greek and Roman times. It is a **Globe Artichoke**, *Cynara cardunculus* var. *scolymus*, which is an edible species of thistle. Artichokes were originally native to the Mediterranean region where they continue to be grown commercially today. Thomas Jefferson was one of the first to grow artichokes in this country back in the late 1700s. Today, in this country they are grown commercially in coastal California but that only represents about 2% of worldwide production; most artichokes are produced in regions around the Mediterranean. Artichoke plants are perennials that do best in regions with mild winters and cool summers. While it is possible to over-winter artichokes in New England, it is difficult because of the effort required and protection from the elements they need. Many people that grow them in this area treat them as annuals and start them from seeds inside every year in the winter. You can purchase the seeds through seed catalogues.



*The Edible Artichoke
 Flower Bud*

Artichokes grow on a plant that can get up to 4 feet wide and 4 feet so leave plenty of space in your garden. The edible part of the artichoke is actually the flower bud which is harvested early when the bud is tight. If the bud begins to open it becomes inedible, but turns into the gorgeous lavender flower that you show in your picture. Not only is it striking, it is an attractive structural element in your garden which lasts for months.

Linda K. Lillie has been President of Sprigs & Twigs, Inc. for the last 20 years. She is a graduate of Connecticut College in Botany, an accredited NOFA Organic Land Care Professional, a Connecticut Master Gardener and a national award winning landscape designer for her design and installation projects..

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