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Spanische Artischocke

Cardoon / Spanish Artichoke

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Cynara cardunculus

In the Spanish Artichoke not the hearts are commonly eaten, like with other species, but merely the fleshy leafstalks with its nutty taste are traditionally prepared as vegetable. The strong cultural plant can grow up to two meters and develops big foliage leaves with the typical thick leafstalks, and from July to September numerous dark-purple and up to 15 cm big flowers. It best shows to advantage in every ornamental flowerbed and is also suitable for dry flower arrangements and table decoration. For that, just cut the flowers and arrange them neatly in a vase, with the stalks not touching the bottom.

Natural location: The Spanish Artichoke originally comes from the Mediterranean region. In Germany it was a commonly used vegetable until the end of the 19th century, and there are recipes in many older cookbooks.

Cultivation: Seed propagation indoors is possible throughout the year. However, if you want to harvest the first fruits within the same year, you should start the propagation between January and March. Spread the seeds onto moist potting compost, put just a little compost earth on top and keep the earth moist by spraying it again with some water. Then, cover the seed container with clear film to prevent the earth from drying out. Don't forget to make some holes in the clear film and take it every second or third day completely off for about 2 hours. That way you avoid mold formation on your potting compost. Place the seed container somewhere bright and warm with a temperature between 20°C and 24°C and keep the earth moist, but not wet. In mid May, when there are no more frosty nights expected, you can plant the seedlings out.

Place: The Spanish Artichoke wants to be kept outdoors at a sunny and preferably wind-protected place.

Care: The plant prefers a nutritious and well-drained soil for cultivation and needs plenty of water, while waterlogging has to be avoided implicitly. In August you may fertilize once with nettle swill or another nutritious fertilizer.

During the winter: Usually, the cultivated Spanish Artichoke doesn't hibernate and grows of new seeds every year. Once planted in the garden bed, you can also protect the plant during winter with some brushwood, and against stronger frosts with a garden fleece.