

Echinops - Care Guide

Growing Echinops Bannaticus – Globe Thistle

At Caerhays a clump of echinops has thrived and flowered away in a border for over 50 years untroubled by cold, drought or anything else. In a mild winter it still has blue flower heads nearly until Christmas and these have often been shown in my Garden Diary. A most resilient garden worthy plant!

Echinops bannaticus originates in SE Europe where it grows in gravel slopes and dry grassland. It is a clump forming plant which is perennial and nearly an evergreen in the mildest locations in Cornwall.

It has densely grey 'woolly' stems and ovate to elliptic grey-green leaves which are spiny and hairy and up to 10in long. Not a great plant for children to play near but they soon learn. The term 'sea holly' which is actually used to describe Eryngiums is a pretty appropriate common name for Echinops as well even if incorrect.

From mid to late summer this plant produces flower stalks extending from 1½-4ft in height. Each blue-grey to blue spherical flower is 1-2in across and only one flower head appears on each stalk.

E. bannaticus 'Taplow Blue' has clear blue flower heads and E. bannaticus 'Veitch's Blue' has silvery foliage and darker blue flowers.

Echinops (like deciduous species of eryngium) grow best in poor well drained soil in full sun but they will actually grow almost anywhere.

The best tip is to remove the flower stems or spikes before they set seed and die off. This will encourage a second and even a third crop of flowers in a single long season.

Echinops can readily be grown from seed sown in spring. However, like many perennials with chubby and fleshy roots, the easiest way to propagate them is to lift and divide the clumps or to take root cuttings into the greenhouse in winter and grow them on into growth with bottom heat in a loose compost. This, we find, is more successful than simply replanting pieces of root into the garden.



Echinops, Echiums & Acanthus



E. bannaticus



E. bannaticus



E. bannaticus



E. bannaticus 'Taplow Blue'



E. bannaticus 'Taplow Blue'



E. bannaticus 'Veitch's Blue'



E. bannaticus 'Veitch's Blue'

View this video on Youtube here <https://www.youtube.com/PZVnqYy1LIA>

Drying Echinops For Winter Display - Video Tip

View this video on Youtube here <https://www.youtube.com/ztq7ylk2OKI>

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