



EDIBLE
GARDENING
SERIES

Asparagus

A perennial vegetable whose shoots are picked as young spears in the spring. Later in the season, the foliage matures into an airy fernlike cloud which changes to a golden color in the fall. Don't prune the ferny stalks to tidy up the bed: they are providing the energy for next year's spears. Each crown can produce a half-pounds of spears per year when fully established. A well prepared asparagus will last at least 20 years.

Asparagus is an excellent source of Vitamin A, contains calcium, phosphorus, riboflavin and Vitamin C. It is one of the first vegetables ready to harvest in the spring. Hardy to -40°F.

EXPOSURE

Full sun with at least 8 hours of sun a day.

PLANNING

When planning your asparagus bed it should be planted at the side or end of the garden as a separate entity. Each mature plant may send up 15-20 spears when it matures. Purchase one year old, healthy, disease free crowns. Plant 10 to 15 crowns for each family member. If you want to can, freeze or are especially fond of it, plant at least 25 plants for each family member.

Purchase male varieties of Asparagus as they just produce spears and do not waste their energy in producing seeds. The "Jersey" lines produce a high percentage of male plants.

PREPARING

It is crucial to properly prepare the site prior to planting so there will be a good depth of rich, fertile, well drained soil.

• Clay Soil

When planting asparagus in clay soil bed, it should be prepared in the fall of the previous year. This allows the organic matter to compost thoroughly prior to planting asparagus roots. Asparagus roots are soft and starchy rather than woody, and can easily compost if planted with rotting manure. A way around this is to plant your asparagus in a raised garden bed.

The ground should be excavated to a depth of 2 feet. Add drainage to bottom of planting bed such as stone, broken brick or drainage rock. Add a couple of inches of **Harvest Supreme Compost** to the bottom of the planting bed. Incorporate **Harvest Supreme Planting Compost**, **Bonide Bone Meal** (4 oz. per square yard) and **Bonide Dolomite Lime** (1 pound of lime into each 10 feet of trench) with soil that was removed from planting area, amend the soil well, and put back into planting area.

• Sandy Loam Soils

When planting your asparagus roots in well drained soil you do not have to prepare area the previous fall. Incorporate **Harvest Supreme Planting Compost**, ($\frac{1}{2}$ Harvest Supreme to $\frac{1}{2}$ existing soil.) **Bone Meal** (4 o.z per square yard) and **Hi Yield Dolomite Lime** (1 pound of lime per 10 feet of trench)

• Raised Beds

Use **sandy loam**, **Harvest Supreme**, **Bone Meal** and **lime**. (See **Sandy Loam Soils** section above for amounts.)

Please turn the page for more information. ➡

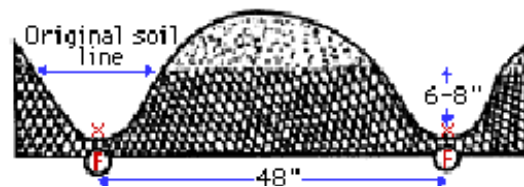
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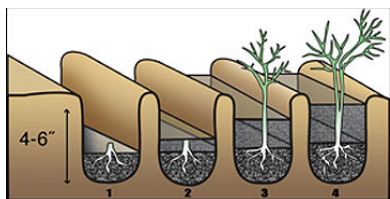


PLANTING

Place plant in a trench 12 to 18 inches wide and 6 inches deep. Apply **Super Triple Phosphate** (0-40-0) in the bottom of trench, add a little soil over the top and then place your asparagus roots on the bottom of trench. Orient the crowns when planting with the crown on top and the roots or "legs" spread in a downward direction. This is easily done by forming a ridge of soil placed in the center of the trench. Cover crowns with 2 inches of soil gradually fill the remaining portion of the trench during the first summer as the plants grow.



Side view of typical furrow construction. X = crown or transplant placement; F = fertilizer placement (2 to 3 inches below the bottom of the furrow)



Healthy, one-year-old asparagus crowns planted 4 to 6 inches deep in a furrow.

Distance between crowns (bud to bud) is determined by spear dimension required. A thick spear ($\frac{1}{2}$ – $\frac{3}{4}$ inches) is obtained by planting crown 12 to 14 inches apart. A thinner spear ($\frac{3}{8}$ – $\frac{5}{8}$ inches) is obtained by planting 8 to 10 inches apart.

FERTILIZING

Fertilize in the spring with **Dr. Earth Vegetable Fertilizer** and again when harvest has been completed and the plants begin to fern out.

MULCHING

Apply 2 to 4 inches of **Harvest Supreme** in the spring and again in the fall. Asparagus crowns migrate to the surface of the soil over time because the new crown grow on top of last years crown every year, so it is important to apply **Harvest Supreme** so the crown of your asparagus plants are 3 to 5 inches below soil surface.

WATERING

Irrigation will increase productivity (spear size and numbers) and longevity of the planting. It will also increase vigor and decrease risk of infection. When watering the first year, water so water penetrates the soil to 8 inches. In the following seasons, water thoroughly by slowly applying 2 to 3 inches every 2 weeks during dry weather.

HARVESTING

Do not harvest spears the first year let them get their roots established. The second year you can harvest for 2 to 3 weeks or until they develop ferny stalks. The third year and there after harvest can last 8 to 12 weeks. Begin harvesting spears that are finger sized and about 8 inches long. You can either snap off the spears or cut them with a knife right below the soil line.

PRUNING

In the fall when the top (fern) growth browns, cut off growth at ground level and throw away.

USES

Steamed, boiled, broiled, sautéed, canned, frozen, pickled, stir fried.

CHECK LIST

- Asparagus Roots
- Dolomite Lime
- Bone Meal

- Super Triple Phosphate
- Harvest Supreme
- Dr. Earth Vegetable Fertilizer