

Growing Asparagus

Steps to Succeed with this Perennial Vegetable

Asparagus is a very rewarding vegetable to grow, but it does take some effort to establish, and a few years to come into production. Once established, it is fairly easy to maintain.



Preparation for planting

- Store the asparagus crowns in a cool, dry location until ready to plant. Do not store crowns in plastic bags.
- Choose a site with full sun- a minimum of 6 hours a day during the summer.
- Asparagus needs well-drained soil. Winter wet soil will lead to quick decline. On heavy soil, consider building a raised bed.
- Dig a trench 18" wide and 6"-8" deep. Mix the soil from the trench with compost or aged manure. Set it aside.
- If building a raised bed, work some aged manure or compost into the soil surface to a depth of 4"-6". Plan on your raised bed to be 10"-12" deep when finished.
- Soak the asparagus crowns for 1-2 hours in water.
- Lay the crown on the floor of the trench or raised bed.
- Spread each crown's root mass out so they do not overlap- at least 12" apart, preferably 18" apart.
- Cover the crowns with 2"-3" of soil-compost mix. Water in.
- As the spears begin to grow, slowly add more soil compost mix until the trench is full, or the raised bed in 10"-12" high. This should take about 6-8 weeks.

Care and harvest of Asparagus

- The first spring, do not harvest any spears. The second spring, harvest spears sparingly. Stop harvesting when the spears are the diameter of a pencil or smaller. Established beds can be harvested usually for 6-8 weeks.
- Harvest the spears by cutting or breaking the stalk just above the soil.
- Water the asparagus bed during dry summer weather. Keep it weeded and mulched.
- If stalks begin to flop outward from the bed (they can reach 6' or more in height), corral them with a couple of stakes and twine.
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Asparagus beetle

- Watch for and control asparagus beetles by hand picking, or with neem oil based sprays or spinosad.
- Control aphids with horticultural soap or a strong jet of water.
- After the stalks die down in winter, cut them to the ground and mulch the bed with compost.
- Fertilize each spring before the new spears appear with a good vegetable fertilizer.

