



Asparagus

(*Asparagus officinalis*)



PLANT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AFTER RECEIPT

Asparagus is a perennial stem vegetable that greets us every spring. It may take 1 to 2 years to get started and produce, so patience is needed! But then the plant can be productive up to 20 years, so we think it's worth the wait.

Regions with cool winters are best for this cool-season crop.

Planting

- Asparagus is planted in Autumn or early spring as soon as the soil can be worked. The plant is grown from “crowns” (1-year-old plants).
- Eliminate all weeds from the bed, digging it over and working in a 2- to 4-inch layer of compost, manure or soil mix.
- Dig trenches of about 6 inches wide and 6 to 8 inches deep. Some experts believe shallow trenches of 6 inches are best.
- Asparagus does not like to have its feet “wet,” so be sure your bed has good drainage. For that reason, raised beds can be a good place to plant asparagus.
- Create a mound in the trench and plant the crowns 15 to 18 inches apart, spreading the roots over and down the ridge.
- Cover the roots and crowns with soil so just the very tips of the crown show and water thoroughly.
- After a couple of months and as the stems grow, fill in the rest of the trench with soil, so the crown is about 2 to 3 inches underground.

Care

- Late Summer. (after the trench has been filled) , add a 2 to 4 inch layer of mulch and water regularly.
- Do not harvest the spears in the first year, but cut down dead foliage in late Autumn and side-dress with compost. During the second year, keep the bed thickly mulched, side-dress in spring and early fall, and cut down dead foliage in late fall.

Harvest/Storage

- Asparagus can take three growing seasons to harvest; you may be able to lightly harvest during the second year.
- In the first year, just let the asparagus go vegetative to give the crown a chance to get well established. Next spring, remove the old fern growth from the previous year, and keep an eye open for the new spears to begin emerging.
- For the following years, maintain the bed and harvest only the spears thicker than a pencil. The asparagus can be harvested for a period of about two to three weeks once the spears start to show. Keep a close eye on your asparagus so that you don't miss the harvest! Cut spears that are about 6 inches in length at an angle. Asparagus freezes well.
- After harvest, allow the ferns to grow; this replenishes the nutrients for next year's spear production.