

Asparagus

A permanent and dependable home garden vegetable; delicious spears reappear every spring, but take 2-3 years to come into full production.

PLANTING: Soak roots overnight prior to planting. Pick a sunny spot with **good drainage**. Create a trench 12” wide and 8” deep. Place crowns on top of individual mounds of soil created inside the trench, making sure that each crown does not touch one another. This is because the roots tend to mold with contact to each other. Plant crowns roughly 12” apart, depending on the size. Now cover with soil so their tops are 6” to 8” below surface.

MAINTENANCE: Weed only 2-3” around crowns when the crowns are dormant so as not to disturb their roots. During initial growth period, irrigate well, allowing soil to dry out a bit in between waterings. Once bed is well established, asparagus is very drought tolerant and not in need of fertilizing. After about 3 years you’ll want to add more soil on top of the crowns to keep them below the soil surface where they’re most happy.

FERTILIZING: Lime or bone meal can help sweeten up acidic soils. Our asparagus growers recommend building a bed rich in organic matter in the Fall and planting into it in the Spring.

HARVESTING: Allow plants to grow undisturbed their first year. Harvest lightly next spring cutting spears only for 4-6 weeks. Cultivate, fertilize and irrigate heavily; then cut back on irrigation and fertilization once the bed is established.

CAUTION: Fall clean up in the asparagus bed is vital for preventing disease. Ones to watch out for are blight, gray mold, rust and fusarium wilt.

It is debatable whether it matters if your plants are male or female. Some say that male plants may be more “sturdy” for they are not using any energy to create the fruit and seeds to reproduce, although it is harder to say if this affects the size and quality of the spears. We offer an exclusively male variety called Jersey Knight, and a variety called Sweet Purple, which is both male and female. You can differentiate the genders by root size. The larger roots are male.