

# Growing Asparagus

Asparagus is a good source of vitamins A, C, and minerals and is a highly productive vegetable when grown in cooler areas. Below is a quick guide for growing asparagus.

Category	Directions and Notes
<b>Location</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cool area.</li> </ul>
<b>Soil</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grows well in high pH soils but does not do well if pH is below 6.</li> <li>New beds: till in 2-3 lbs of 6-12-12 fertilizer (or similar) per 20 feet of row.</li> <li>Established beds: scatter 1-2 lbs of 6-12-12 fertilizer per 20 feet of row before growth begins in the spring.</li> </ul>
<b>Planting Directions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spread a 3" layer of organic matter (manure, rotted sawdust or compost) over the planned planting area.</li> <li>Till or spade to a depth of 10-12" and turn the soil so all organic matter is covered. After tilling, mark rows 4-6' apart.</li> <li>Dig a furrow 4" wide and 6-12" deep.</li> <li>Place the crowns in the furrow, cover with 2-3" of soil and firm the soil around the roots. Do not fill the entire furrow at once. Plant crowns 6-12" deep in loose soils and 4-6" in heavier soils. Place crowns 12-14" apart.</li> <li>Fill the furrows gradually as the shoots grow. This covers small weeds, and they die from lack of light. By the end of the first season, the furrow reaches its normal level.</li> </ul>
<b>Maintenance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asparagus plants like frequent, deep watering. Allow the top 1" of soil to dry before watering again.</li> <li>Control weeds without damaging the spears.</li> </ul>
<b>Harvesting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Harvest spears when they are 4-10" long.</li> <li>Cut asparagus spears 1-2" inches below the soil level. At least ½ the length of the spear should be above the ground. Never cut the spear within 2" of the crown to avoid damage to the developed buds.</li> <li>Harvest asparagus spears from established beds for about 8 weeks. Do not harvest too soon from a new planting.</li> <li>Discontinue harvest when spear diameter becomes less than 3/8".</li> <li>After the last harvest, cut back all top growth. Apply fertilizer and till lightly 1-2" inches to kill weeds. Cover the bed with a 3" layer of clean straw, compost or other mulch material, water thoroughly and allow growing the rest of the year. This helps ensure a good harvest the next year.</li> </ul>
<b>Special Notes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An asparagus planting lasts 15 to 25 years without replanting if it is well cared for and the climate is suitable.</li> <li>Asparagus is grown from 1-year-old plants or "crowns". It requires 3 years from the time the crown is planted until the bed is in full production. Since an asparagus planting lasts many years, good planting bed preparation is essential.</li> </ul>
<b>Varieties</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jersey Giant</li> </ul>

