



# ASPARAGUS

*(Asparagus officinalis)*

Asparagus is a perennial that may be productive in your garden for up to 20 years. Its fern-like foliage grows to over 3 feet tall with a spread of about 18". Male and female plants are available, since the female plants produce seeds; they are less productive as a vegetable. The F1 all male hybrid cultivars are the most productive. We sell Jersey Knight all male and Sweet Purple.

Asparagus is a cool season crop, growing best at 60° to 75° in regions with cold winters that provide the necessary dormant period. Choose an open site with moderately fertile soil. Acidic soil may need to be limed. Good drainage is essential. Asparagus can be grown in raised beds to improve the drainage. Work manure and compost into the soil.

Asparagus is usually grown by planting 1 to 2 year old crowns planted in the spring. The crowns should not be allowed to dry out before planting. Start by digging a trench about 12" wide and 8" deep with a mound about 4" high in the center. Place the asparagus crowns on the ridge allowing about 15" per plant. Spread the roots out over the mound and cover them with soil to the level of the crowns. Fill the rest of the trench gradually as the stems grow, leaving 3-4 inches of the stem exposed.

## **Bed Prep and Planting:**

Prepare bed well! Asparagus beds can last 100 years or more.

1. Plant in full sun
2. In Wisconsin, plant after April 15<sup>th</sup>
3. Prepare bed to a depth of 12-18" if possible so roots can grow down over time. Soil should be light, loose, well drained and WEED FREE. Use generous amounts of well rotted manure or compost. Dig trenches 8" deep and 12" wide. Form mounds 3" high at 18" intervals.
4. pH should be 6.5-7. Have a soil test to determine. Mention you are growing asparagus for best recommendations.
5. Snip off any broken or rotted roots. Trim a maximum of 2-3" to make roots equal in length.
6. Place the crowns on the soil mounds spreading the roots out.

7. Cover the crowns with 2-3” of soil; water, but do not flood. More frequent watering is better than heavy watering.
8. When shoots appear, cover with more soil. Repeat as the shoots grow until the trench is filled, letting some green always show.
9. A few weeks after planting, lightly apply a general purpose fertilizer. Avoid 10-10-10. Cover with mulch to avoid weeds and conserve moisture.
10. Apply fertilizer in the early fall. Organic fertilizer or winterizer is best.

**Harvesting:**

Do **NOT** 1<sup>st</sup> year  
2<sup>nd</sup> year- harvest a few  
3<sup>rd</sup> year- harvest 3 to 4 weeks only  
4<sup>th</sup> year- harvest 6 weeks

Spears should be 6-8” tall with unopened top. Allow uncut spears to form foliage for future crops. Cut back foliage in the late fall.