

# Asparagus

This delicious member of the lily family is native to Greece and was first cultivated around 2500 years ago. The name originates from the Greek word meaning “sprout”.

Asparagus is a long-lived crop that can produce for over 10 years. The crowns can be planted in late February through early April.

## Growing Conditions

Asparagus likes full sun and well-drained soil. If your soil is heavy, mound up soil mixed with compost or plant in a raised bed. Asparagus does best in alkaline soil (a high pH). Because soil in the Northwest tends to be acidic clay, it's important to prepare the planting bed well. Here's how to plant:

- Dig a trench about 8”deep
- Mix in compost such as Black Forest
- Mix in one pound of bone meal and one pound of lime per 10 feet of trench
- Plant crowns 12 inches apart, 2-4 inches deep
- Water thoroughly after planting
- As the plants grow, cover with more soil until the trench is full

## Harvesting

To help the crowns get a healthy start, do not harvest the spears the first year. Let them develop into tall ferny stalks and then cut them to the ground in the fall when they turn brown.

The second year you can harvest a few of the larger spears. Snap them off at the ground or cut just below the soil level with a sharp knife. From the third year on, you'll be able to harvest spears for 8 to 12 weeks each spring.

## Disease Prevention

Asparagus is susceptible to the soil fungus fusarium. The best way to avoid this disease is to make sure the plants have good soil and full sun.

Other common pests are the asparagus beetle and cutworm. These can be controlled by cleaning the beds in the fall or with natural pesticides such as Neem or BT (a natural bacterial control).