



Growing Asparagus



California is the leader in Asparagus production in the United States. Grow your own fresh asparagus at home with these tips! Adapted from the Horticulture Department at Purdue University.

Preparing & Planting

Asparagus thrives in fertile, loose soil with good drainage. This is why the Delta region of California produces so much of this delectable vegetable!

Plant the asparagus at the west or north side of the garden so it will not shade other vegetables or be disturbed by tilling. Foliage can get 4' wide and 6' tall, so plan accordingly. Asparagus can produce for 15 years or more with proper care.

Each crown produces approximately a half pound of spears per year when fully established. Count on planting at least **30-40 crowns for an average family of four**. Two rows, each 20' long and spaced 4' apart from center will accommodate this amount.

Amend the planting area with **Paydirt** at the rate of one bag per three feet of row or four bags per dozen crowns. Add our "baby food," **Master Start** according to package directions to start off new roots.

Dig trenches 5-6" deep, make sure the roots are spread out evenly, and backfill with only 2" of soil (see image at top). Research shows deeper plantings will actually reduce yields. As shoots develop, backfill the trench a little at a time (keeping tips exposed) until even with the surrounding soil.

Use Paydirt at the rate of 1 bag per 3' of row or 4 bags per dozen plants



Back-fill trench with amended soil even to original soil level.

First Year Care

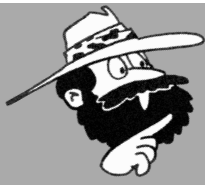
Buy your asparagus in winter during bare root season and let it grow without harvesting the first year. The foliage will provide energy for next year's harvest.

Feed your asparagus every six to eight weeks with **Master Nursery Tomato and Vegetable Food** throughout the growing season until the foliage turns

brown in late fall. Regular feeding will ensure maximum production and thick, tender spears.

Don't skimp on water when the top growth is developing. Soak deeply (40-60 minutes) when the soil begins to dry out at root depth. Continue watering until foliage turns brown in fall.





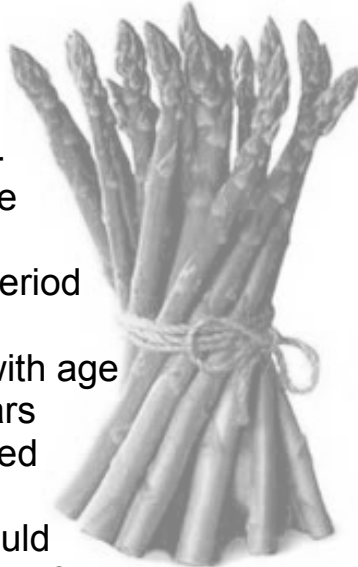
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Growth and Harvest

Early in the second year, a few 5-9" spears can be harvested every 2-4 days, for about three weeks.

The harvest period will increase the subsequent years with age of the crowns. Spears that are not harvested before the tips are loose and ferny should be allowed to turn into foliage because they will be tough. The size of the spear has no bearing on its toughness, but maturity of the spear does.



Asparagus should be harvested in the morning and stored in plastic bags or bundled and standing in a bowl with an inch or so of water in the refrigerator. Asparagus can keep one to two weeks and retain its quality.

There are several methods of harvesting asparagus. One is to snap spears off by bending them sharply until they break. You can also cut them with a sharp knife, but be careful to avoid damaging other developing spears in the area. Cut at a 45° angle about a half inch below the soil level.

Small, thin spears (an indication that stored food in the crown is running low) should signal the end of harvest. At this point, remaining spears should be allowed to develop into ferny foliage.

In fall, cut off the dead stems at the ground. In the spring, renew the **Paydirt** and soil as needed.

Insects and Disease

Asparagus are susceptible to several diseases and pests. We recommend monitoring for common pests include aphid, spider mite and snails and slugs.

Common diseases include rust, and crown rot. Rust fungus will appear as yellowish spots on the stems followed by rust colored powdery patches on the stalks and leaves. Crown rot causes yellowing and wilting of foliage. Several pathogens or over watering can be causes of crown rot.

Make sure plants have plenty of sunlight and air circulation to prevent rust. Healthy plants that are not damaged and good drainage can help prevent rot.

Remember that if you are using any sprays or baits to follow the directions and always use products allowed for edibles.

Varieties, Etc...

UC 72 - Disease resistant, can get 4-5' tall, 1-3' wide. May take 2-3 years to reach full production. High production of large, uniform spears. Good for the Central Valley and drought tolerant once established.

Purple - Mild, nutty flavor when cooked—20% higher sugar content than green varieties. Spears turn green when cooked.

White - White asparagus is actually green asparagus not exposed to light. Dirt is kept mounded around the emerging stalk, depriving it of light. The plant cannot produce chlorophyll without light, thus there is no green color to the stalks. White asparagus is considered to be slightly milder in flavor and a bit more tender than green asparagus.

All varieties and colors may be used interchangeably in recipes.