

## Asparagus

### About Asparagus

Asparagus can be started by seed or by crowns. Planting 1 year crowns (dormant roots) is the most popular. Starting asparagus seed can be tricky and is often left to professional growers. Patience is needed when starting out growing asparagus because it will not produce for 2-3 years, but it can continue to produce for up to 20 years. When planting crowns, it is one less year of waiting unlike starting the asparagus from seed which will take one extra year.

Older varieties, Mary Washington, have both male and female asparagus spears. Female spears are smaller and thinner in size later producing red berries. Male asparagus spears are heftier and more desirable. Newer varieties such as the 'Jersey' series and 'UC 157' produce all male spears.

### Preparing and Planting Asparagus

Asparagus should be planted in the early spring. Plant asparagus in an area that is in full sun or partial shade with well-drained soil. Asparagus plants prefer looser soil that contains organic substance.

Once an area is established, dig a trench approximately 8" deep and about 1' wide. Place the crowns in the trench spreading out the roots. Place the crowns about 18" -24" apart from one another. Add 1"-2" of soil on top of the crowns in the trench. Gradually fill in the trench with soil as the crowns grow.

Asparagus can also be bought in a container where it is already started. When transplanting asparagus into the ground, dig a hole that is slightly deeper than the container that the asparagus was in. Fill in around the asparagus plant only as high as the plant is. The asparagus will be sitting lower in the hole but as the asparagus grows, add soil around the base until the soil is all level.

It is easy for asparagus patches to be taken over by weeds. To prevent this, mulch the asparagus patch mid-summer with straw, marsh hay, or leaves and then removing in spring. In fall, do not cut back the asparagus that goes to seed. It will naturally die back.



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