

Planting Bare-root Asparagus Plus... Care & Harvest



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Asparagus can be planted as soon as the ground is workable in spring. Asparagus is a perennial vegetable so it comes back year after year. The fern-like stalks will grow up to 6' tall. While asparagus may use more space and take about 3 years to come into full production, they ultimately pay off, **providing spears for 15–20 years in spring**. Consider situating them as background plants in perennial beds and borders to conserve space.

Choose a sunny site. Asparagus needs well-drained soil so if you have heavy soils amend with organic matter such as rotted manure, compost or leaf mold; anything to help lighten the soil. Additives such as perlite, vermiculite and decayed bark or chips are also beneficial.

Planting Dig a trench 6 to 8" deep and wide. Space trenches 4-6' apart. Asparagus spears will be larger the deeper the roots are planted. Back fill with 2" of loose soil and Espoma Plant-tone and water the trench well. Set the roots 15-18 inches apart, mounding the soil slightly under each plant so the crown is slightly above the root. Spread out the roots so they radiate out from the shoot like spokes on a wagon wheel. Cover the roots with 2" of soil and firm the soil. Water again.



Well mulched beds ready to harvest

The most important factor is to keep the area as **weed free** as possible. Weeds will greatly reduce yield. You can lightly cultivate with a hoe to remove weeds, but avoid using any tillage implement that can damage the crown, reduce yields and promote diseases. Organic mulches such as grass clippings, wood chips, straw/hay or compost can be applied 4 to 6" thick to suppress weeds. Cover crops such as rye or buckwheat may be spring-seeded between rows to suppress weeds. Glyphosate (one brand is Round-up) can be used as a broadcast application to control winter annual and biennial weeds early in the spring before the spears emerge. Common rock salt was once used to control weeds in asparagus. However, this is **not recommended** because the salt can damage soil structure by creating a crust that impedes water infiltration.

After harvest, fertilize with 1.2 pounds of high nitrogen fertilizer per 1,000 square feet to stimulate summer and fall fern growth.

Harvest The yield of asparagus spears in the spring is directly related to the previous year's fern growth. Asparagus can be harvested for 2 weeks the third year after planting. Overharvesting one year can weaken the plant and decrease yields the following year. In the fourth year, you should be able to harvest spears for 4 weeks. The following years, you can harvest for 8 weeks.

Harvest spears when they reach 7 to 9" in length in cool weather (less than 70 degrees Fahrenheit), and when the spear tip is tight; or 5 to 7" in warmer weather (more than 70 degrees).

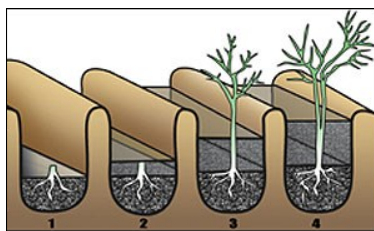
Harvest by snapping spears off by hand near ground level. Snapping will break the spear cleanly at a tender point. Cutting with a knife is not recommended because it may spread disease from plant to plant.



Trench method



Elevated crowns with spread-out roots



Gradually backfill

As the shoots grow, gradually fill the trench with more soil taking care not to cover the growing tips with soil. (About 2" every 2 weeks.) Fertilize plants during the first growing season with 10-10-10 all-purpose fertilizer.

After first planting, irrigate whenever soil begins to dry out at root depth. After the first year, provide regular, deep soakings

General Care Asparagus will tolerate dry weather.

Do not mow ferns in early fall while they are still green because this will reduce the following spring's harvest. Otherwise, leave the brown stems on over winter and chop them down in spring.