

Cultural Details: Asparagus from Seeds

VHA005

Combines a high return with a productive life of around 20 years. Requires relatively little maintenance. F1 hybrid 'all male' varieties are far higher yielding than the traditional types. Crowns are established roots, which are lifted and packed immediately before despatch.

Sow seeds (45-60/g) in January into modules at 16-18°C, following a 24 hour soak. Transplant in April or early May. Otherwise sow seeds into seedbed outdoors March to early May. Raising Asparagus from seed will delay heavy cropping by an extra year when compared with using crowns to establish a new production area.

Plant out crowns at 30 x 120cm, harvest a small crop the following year. Plant population approx. 20,000 per hectare for white spears, and approx. 25,000 per hectare for green or purple spears. Harvest small crop in year two, then crop normally in subsequent seasons.

Cultural Details: Asparagus from Crowns

We hope that your asparagus crowns have reached you in perfect condition and will provide you with plentiful crops for many years to come. As asparagus crowns can deteriorate when out of the soil, we recommend that they are planted on receipt. However if this is not possible, wrap the crowns in damp newspaper, and store in frost-free conditions.

Site and Soil

As asparagus is a long-term crop, it is very important that the site is selected carefully. Asparagus prefers a rich, free-draining soil, sun and protection from strong winds. It is worth preparing the site well to avoid back-breaking work later, so dig in plenty of compost or manure and remove as many weeds as possible. If you have an acid soil, an application of lime is strongly advised.

Planting

Dig a trench 8in (20cm) deep by 12in (30cm) wide, and create a small mound down the trench about three inches high. Sit the crown on the mound, and spread out the roots evenly. Space the crowns 12in (30cm) apart within the trench, and space the rows at least 24in (60cm) apart. Return the soil to the trench and firm down well.

Looking after your Crop

Hand weed regularly, and do not allow the asparagus to go short of water. Apply a general purpose fertiliser in March, according to the manufacturer's instructions. Whilst in the autumn, cut down the ferny stems once they have yellowed, and add a generous amount of compost or manure.

Harvesting

To enable the asparagus to establish, do not harvest during the year of planting, and allow the ferns to develop. However a light crop may be harvested next April to June, and in following years a normal crop can be taken. Cut the shoots with a sharp knife approximately 3in (7cm) below the soil surface. The harvesting period is normally between late April and the third week of June. Try not to harvest too late in the season, as this will weaken the plant and yield will be affected the following year. After harvesting, a light dressing of fertilizer can be applied to give the plants a boost.

Information provided for guidance only, as cultural practices and climatic circumstances vary.