



GROWING ASPARAGUS

SPACING AND DEPTH:

Place the plants in a trench 12 to 18 inches wide and a full six inches deep. The crowns should be spaced 9 to 12 inches apart. Spread the roots out uniformly, with the crown bud side up, in an upright, centered position, slightly higher than the roots. Cover the crown with two inches of soil. Gradually fill the remaining portion of the trench during the first summer as the plants grow taller.

CARE:

Asparagus should be fertilized in the same way as the rest of the garden the first 3 years. In the spring, apply 10-10-10, 12-12-12- or 15-15-15 fertilizer at the rate of 20 to 25 pounds per 1,000 square feet of area or 2 pounds per 100 square feet and incorporate with soil tillage. Starting in the third season, apply the same amount of fertilizer but delay application until June or July (immediately after the final harvest). Weeds and grasses are the worst problems with asparagus. They compete with the developing spears, making an unsightly area in the garden and significantly decrease yield and quality. Start frequent, light, shallow cultivation early in the spring in both young plantings and mature patches that are being harvested.

HARVESTING:

Asparagus can be harvested the second year after planting crowns, but for no more than one month the first season. During the third year and thereafter, the spears may be harvested from their first appearance in the spring through May and June.

Harvest spears 5 to 8 inches in length by cutting or snapping. If you must store asparagus, treat it as you would treat a cut flower. Trim the stems and stand them in a glass with one to two inches of water. Cover with a plastic bag and refrigerate for 2 to 3 days.

To Freeze Asparagus: Blanch spears 2 minutes in boiling water. Cool in ice water for 5 minutes. Drain. Package. Freeze.

VARIETIES:

- **Mary Washington (heirloom):** Older and most common. Produces smaller, more tender spears with succulent flavor.
- **Jersey Knight (hybrid):** Extremely vigorous. Disease resistant. Produces large, tender green spears with purple tips.

