

Asparagus

**DID YOU KNOW
HELMUT ZIPNER
PEELED ONE TON OF
ASPARAGUS IN 16 HOURS
AND HOLDS THE WORLD
RECORD IN ASPARAGUS
PEELING?**

WHAT IS ASPARAGUS?

Asparagus is a perennial flowering plant that grows well in zones 3 to 8. If you are growing asparagus in Texas, it prefers the cool areas of north and west Texas. In the spring, this herbaceous plant is harvested, and the long, light green shoots are served as a delicious vegetable. It can be eaten cooked or raw and is found in many dishes around the world such as stir fry, salads, or just as an appetizer. Asparagus is high in vitamin B, C, E, and K. It is a very high source of zinc, calcium, iron, and amino acids. Alongside many health benefits, ancient Greeks and Romans believed asparagus helped to prevent bee stings and relieve toothaches!

HOW TO PLANT ASPARAGUS

When planting asparagus, it is important to choose a clean area, as asparagus plants remain in the same spot for several years. Asparagus grows best in full sun and sandy, well-draining soil. Once you have prepared a clean area, mix some compost with your soil. Mark rows roughly 4 ft. apart to give your asparagus room to grow. Dig furrows 10 inches deep. Before planting, soak your crowns for about 20-30 minutes in either water or compost tea. Plant each crown 14 inches apart. The top of the crowns should be buried 6 inches below the soil. As they develop and grow through the season, make sure to weed around them. Fill in the furrows with more fresh soil as the crowns grow taller.



CARE AND HARVESTING

Asparagus love frequent, deep waterings. The top inch should dry before further watering. If weeds try to surround the plants, use hay, wood chips, straw, or even organic compost to keep them back. It is important that you NOT harvest your asparagus during the first year. After the first frost, you should trim the tops off at ground level. These cuttings can be composted. During the first harvest, two years after planting, you can pick asparagus for about 2 weeks. After three years, you can harvest for 3 weeks. After that, you'll be able to harvest for 4-6 weeks depending on the year. Giving your plant plenty of time to mature before harvesting full crops, enables the root system to mature, and it will promise strong harvests for years to come. Spears ready to harvest will be 4-10 inches long. To prevent diseases, snap off spears at ground level rather than using a knife.

COMMON PESTS AND DISEASES

As with any other plants, asparagus are susceptible to several diseases and pests which you need to be on the lookout for. It is important to check on your asparagus regularly to identify and treat any developing diseases or infections.

Asparagus Beetle

The asparagus beetle is one of the most common pests that feed on asparagus. These bugs can greatly damage asparagus throughout the season. In the winter, the beetle resides in garden borders and trash. If you find these in your garden, immediately remove them by hand, or you can spray them with an organic insecticide.

Crown Rot and Rust

This common disease can be stopped by using an organic chemical such as potassium phosphite or sulfur.

The easiest way to prevent rust is to cut back the infected areas as they die over the winter and dispose of the infected pieces. Although crop rotation isn't really possible with asparagus since it is a perennial plant, avoid planting new beds in the same general vicinity as the old ones. You may have to use a fungicide to kill existing spores.

COMMON VARIETIES OF ASPARAGUS

Jersey Knight
Jersey Supreme

UC 157
Jersey Giant

Mary Washington
Purple Passion

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Website:

[bobwellsnursery.com](#)

Email address:

customerservice@sorellefarms.com