

GROWING GUIDE FOR ASPARAGUS

Binomial Name:	Asparagus officinalis
Varieties:	Mary Washington
Start:	Seedlings
Germination:	10- 12 days, 18°C to 26°C
Seed Life (viability):	3 - 4 years
Soil:	Well drained, acid soil
Sunlight:	Full sun, part shade
Sow Seeds:	1cm deep in 10 - 15cm pots
Transplant/Thin to:	30cm apart
Ave. Days to Harvest:	3 years
Good Companions:	Basil, marigold, nasturtium, parsley, tomato
Bad Companions:	Onion, garlic, potato

Asparagus is native to the Mediterranean and has been cultivated for many centuries. The mature plants, which are either male or female, are lacy and fern-like, with the female plants bearing red berries in the fall. It is a hardy, delicious and very nutritious vegetable whose spears are harvested and enjoyed in the early spring.

It takes a fair amount of work to prepare and plant asparagus but the rewards are well worth the effort. A well planned asparagus bed will deliver tasty delicacies for decades. Unless you can flash freeze asparagus, this is one vegetable to be enjoyed when it is fresh, and then eagerly awaited till next season.

Planting & Growing:

Winter hardy, frost-tolerant perennial that grows in full sun or partial shade. Transplant established seedlings or 1 yr old crowns in the spring or autumn into fertile, well-cultivated trenches 30cm wide and 20-25cm deep in rows 45-60cm apart. Cover the crowns with about 5cm of soil, as the ferns emerge and grow, gradually fill in the furrows with layers of rich soil and organic compost. Add 5-8cm of aged mulch after planting and each season.

Harvesting:

Harvest spears starting the second or third season. Snap off spears just below ground level when they reach harvest size. Stop harvesting when the new spears begin to become spindly and allow plants to grow undisturbed for the rest of the season. When red berries develop, harvest and dry some for fresh asparagus seeds. After frost kills the feathery tops, cut them at ground level and dispose of them.

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