

## Guide for Planting Asparagus

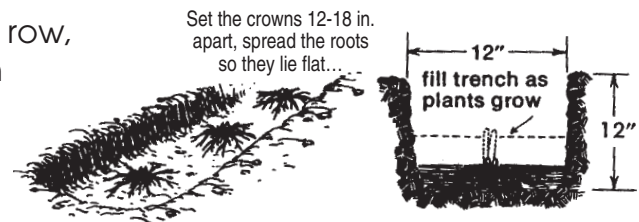
Asparagus is a hardy perennial that will last for 10-15 years in a well maintained patch. Choose a location with rich, well-drained soil, in full sun, apart from your annual vegetables so the soil won't be disturbed every year.

**Prepare soil** — Since you are building a foundation for years of production, take the time to work the soil a foot and half to two feet deep using **Johnson's Soil Recipe** plus cow manure or Compost Chicken Poop.

**Planting transplants (root crowns)** — Asparagus can be planted in early spring (mid March to mid April) or in the fall (early October to mid November).

Dig trenches 8 inches deep and 3 to 4 feet apart (asparagus roots spread wide). Spread some compost or manure in the bottom of the trench and cover with an inch of garden soil.

Set the crowns 12-18 inches apart in the row, spread the roots so they lie flat and cover with 2 inches of soil. As the new shoots come up gradually fill the trench.



**Fertilizing** — For high production and thick spears follow a twice-a-year feeding program. Make one application of *ferti•lome Gardener's Special* (11-15-11) before growth starts in the spring and a second as soon as the harvest is finished to encourage heavy top growth.

Don't skimp on water when the top growth is developing. Spear production in the spring depends on vigorous growth the previous season.

**Harvesting** — When spears are 6 to 8 inches high, snap off at the breaking point 1/2-3/4 inch above the soil level, or cut slightly below the soil level with a sharp knife.

Do not harvest the first year. In subsequent years, harvest until the spear size decreases to thinner than a pencil, usually 6-7 weeks in a mature planting.

Control weeds with mulching, hoeing, or spot chemical treatment. In the autumn, you can remove dead ferns after they are completely brown or leave them in place through the winter to catch moisture and prevent soil loss.

Asparagus deteriorates rapidly after harvest. Store in a cold, moist location and use quickly. Fresh young asparagus is excellent raw in green salads or on a relish platter with a sour cream dip. This vegetable is delicious boiled or steamed, served with a sauce or by itself.

## ***Purple Passion Asparagus***

The "Purple Passion" cultivar of asparagus produces a burgundy colored, low fibered spear with tightly oppressed bud scales and a rounded head shaped tip. The interior spear color is creamy-green. Spear diameters are larger than green asparagus due to the vigorous plant growth associated with the tetraploid (4N) condition of its genetics. Green asparagus cultivars are diploid (2N). Fern height and robustness is exceptional, as is the crown development with storage root volumes that are nearly twice that of green cultivars.

The very mild, sweet tasting spear of "Purple Passion" is a delight to eat. Sugar content of the spear is 20% higher than green asparagus.

The use of these burgundy colored spears as a raw or cooked vegetable is equally recommended. Spears that have been cut diagonally and mixed into a green salad or used in a stir-fried dish are a colorful and tasteful addition. Boiling of the spears changes the anthocyanin pigment, leaving a deep green, tasteful, tender spear. Adente cooking maintains more of the burgundy coloration accents around the bud scales and spear tip which is very appealing.

## ***UC 157 Asparagus***

One of the best varieties of asparagus available for Midwestern gardens is the UC157. It is a proven variety, with a tolerance for fusarium crown rot and improved rust tolerance. In field trials, the UC157 crowns have been more vigorous and produce higher yields than previous Washington varieties and are less prone to open tips in hot weather than the New Jersey varieties. Our crowns are grown in the Kansas River Valley and are very well suited for the Midwest region.