

Asparagus



Asparagus is a perennial vegetable that thrives almost anywhere in the U.S. including our northeast climate. Select a well drained site where it will not interfere with annual crops. Protect the growing area with a heavy hay or straw mulch which should be pulled away in the Spring. Each Fall, add a blanket of manure or compost as asparagus is a heavy feeder. Approximately .15 lbs of nitrogen, .30 lbs of phosphorus and .30 lbs of potassium (potash) are needed per 100 square feet. Blood meal, rock phosphate and greensand are also possible fertilizers.

Plants are quite spindly and should not be harvested until the second year after roots are set out. A 50 foot row containing 35 plants should yield about 15 lbs. of spears by the third year.

Seeds

Sow as early as possible. Soak seed for 48 hours at 85-90 degrees Fahrenheit before sowing. Prepare a seed bed and sow rows 19-24 inches apart with seeds 3-5" apart and about 1 1/2" deep. Don't bother to thin the plants. Some radish seed mixed in will help to mark the rows and makes cultivation easier. Transplant resulting roots the following Spring.

Roots

Keep crowns (roots) cold until ready to plant. Use fertile soil or make it fertile by working in compost. If planting more than one row, rows should be 5' apart. Other vegetables can be intercropped the first year or two to make use of wide aisle space while asparagus is still young. Crowns should be planted deeply because frost-heaving will gradually bring them toward the surface. Dig a trench 15-18" deep, add a few inches of compost to the bottom of the trench, cover compost with 2" of topsoil. Shape the topsoil into little mounds every 16" along the trench. Place a crown on each mound, spreading roots in all directions. Add more topsoil to bury crowns 3-4" deep. Water well and often. When shoots have grown 1 ft tall (June), begin to carefully fill in the trench as the Summer goes on and the plants grow. Keep area well weeded - grass rhizomes must be removed. In Fall or the following Spring after trench is filled in, mulch heavily with weed-seed-free straw, hay or stable bedding.

Harvesting

Do not harvest any shoots during the second growing season. In the third season, harvest for 2-3 weeks only at beginning of season. From fourth season onward, harvest normally (until mid to late June). Never cut or remove the foliage until the asparagus has become completely dormant; these ferns produce the energy that the roots store. Only the female plants produce berries (seeds). If you're not interested in saving seed for new plants, remove the seeds as soon as they appear. A well-prepared asparagus bed, in good soil, should produce abundantly for up to 25 years.

For More Information on Capital District Community Gardens' programs or to make a tax-deductible donation contact:



40 River Street, Troy, NY 12180
518.274.8685 info@cdcg.org
www.cdcg.org