

# Ison's Nursery & Vineyard

## Planting Instructions

### ASPARAGUS Planting Instructions



Asparagus is one of the first crops of spring harvest, and the fresh-picked spears are more tender and tastier during the growing season. Even more, this versatile green is rich in B vitamins, vitamin C, calcium, and iron, making it a healthy (and welcome) addition to any meal.

While the idea of growing asparagus may be overwhelming, it should not be - Asparagus is a great starting point because it is one of the few perennial vegetables that will grow fresh spears year after year with little space and effort. Even though it takes asparagus plants three years to fully mature, it will be well worth it.

Starting asparagus from one-year-old crowns gives you a year's head start over seed-grown plants.

Your asparagus needs a soil pH between 6.5 to 7.0.

#### **Location & Planting:**

Asparagus likes plenty of room to grow. Pick a sunny location to plant.

Space plants 12-18 inches apart with rows spaced 5 feet apart.

Wide spacing promotes rapid drying of foliage to help prevent the onset of fungal diseases.

Dig a hole 6 inches deep or dig a furrow (trench) 6 inches deep and wide enough to accommodate the outspread roots. In the bottom of the hole or furrow: make a mound about 2 inch high of dehydrated cow manure (or compost mixed with the soil taken from the hole).

Position the plant with the bud facing upward, on top of the mound, so the crown (center of the plant) is 3 inches below the soil surface.

Cover the hole or furrow with soil and gently pat the soil to remove any air pockets. Do not compact the soil over the newly filled hole/furrow or the emergence of the asparagus will be severely reduced.

Water your new plants thoroughly.

No pruning is necessary at planting time.

#### **Weeds:**

Weeds can be a major problem for asparagus. On small acreage, light cultivation with a hoe may be used to remove weeds— but avoid a tiller or any other tillage implement that can damage the crown. These could reduce yields and promote diseases. Organic mulches such as grass clippings, wood chips, straw/hay can be applied 4-5 inches thick to suppress weeds.

#### **Fertilizer:**

The first 3 years in spring, apply a well-balanced fertilizer. Starting the fourth year, delay application until June or July (immediately after harvest). This approach encourages vigorous growth of the "fern," which produces and stores nutrients in the roots for next year's production season.

#### **Water:**

During the first 2 years after planting, asparagus plants need 1 to 2 inches per week. If you are not receiving adequate rainfall you will need to water. Use drip irrigation if possible. Mulch around the plant



with compost or grass clippings to help soil moisture and reduce weed growth. After year 4 you can reduce irrigation to every 2-3 weeks.

## **How to Harvest Asparagus**

Do not harvest any asparagus spears during the first two years that plants are in the permanent bed because they need to put energy into establishing deep roots. During the third season, pick the spears over a four-week period, and by the fourth year, extend your harvest to eight weeks. In early spring, harvest spears every third day or so; as the weather warms, you might have to pick your asparagus twice a day to keep up with production.

To harvest, cut asparagus spears with a sharp knife or snap off the spears at, or right below, ground level with your fingers.

## **Yields:**

One plant will produce, 8 to 10 spears    A family of 4 plants, 20-30 crowns.

## **Pruning Tips**

Wait until all the foliage has died back and turned brown or yellow. This normally happens after the first frost.

Cut the plants back to the soil surface and apply mulch to help against deep freeze or changes in soil temperatures.

(Mulching also helps with weed control.) If you have issues with disease or insects, it is best to cut the tops off of your asparagus. You should not need to remove the entire fern. Before the new spears appear in spring, remove the old tops.

