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virginia home food production



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ASPARAGUS

DEPARTMENT OF HORTICULTURE

BLACKSBURG, VIRGINIA MH 401

Reprinted January 1981

ENVIRONMENTAL PREFERENCES

LIGHT: sunny

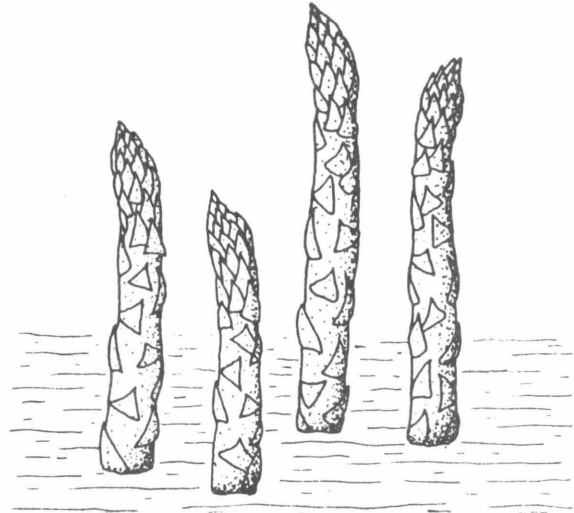
SOIL: well-drained, deep sandy loam

FERTILITY: medium-rich

pH: 6.0-6.7

TEMPERATURE: cool (60-65°F)

MOISTURE: average



CULTURE

PLANTING: one-year crowns,
early spring

SPACING: 18" x 4-5'

HARDINESS: very hardy perennial

FERTILIZER NEEDS: medium-heavy feeder,
high P & K & O.M. at planting,
annual N

CULTURAL PRACTICES:

Asparagus is a perennial vegetable which will live from 12 to 15 years. It is one of the most valuable of the early vegetables and is well-adapted to freezer storage. The spears develop daily in early spring.

Start asparagus either from seed or from one to two-year-old crowns. Crowns are recommended. Asparagus crowns should be set in late March.

Soil type determines the depth to plant crowns. A common method of planting is to dig a trench 12 to 18 inches wide and 6 to 8 inches deep. Plant at the shallower depth if the soil is heavy. Rotted manure or compost should be mixed with soil before settling the crowns. Set plants 15 to 18 inches apart in rows 30 inches apart. The crown should be placed on top of a small amount of soil in the bottom of the trench so the crown is slightly higher than the roots. Spread the roots out and cover the crown with 2 to 3 inches of soil. Firm down well. As plants grow, continue to pull soil in

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around and over the crows until the trench is filled.

Asparagus shoots or spears should not be harvested the first year after crowns are set. Harvest for three to four weeks the second year. The fleshy root system needs to develop and store food reserves to produce growth the following year. Plants harvested too heavily too early often become weak and spindly. After the third year, harvest for eight to ten weeks.

Harvest spears daily when they are 5 to 7 inches tall. Break off just below the soil level instead of cutting below the soil surface. Cutting too deeply can easily injure the crown buds which produce the next spears.

Support the growing foliage with stakes and strings during summer to keep tidy. Cut the foliage down to 2 inches above the ground after the first frost when the foilage yellows, but before the red berries fall off. Harvest in early morning and use or refrigerate immediately.

COMMON PROBLEMS

DISEASES: rust (use resistant varieties)

INSECTS: asparagus beetles, cutworms

CULTURAL: few. (Do not harvest too much too soon or cut too deeply.)

NUTRITIONAL VALUE

Spears, 1/2" diam. at base

	<u>Grams</u>	<u>Calories</u>
4 spears . . .	60	10
	<u>% U.S. RDA</u>	
	<u>Vitamin A</u>	<u>Vitamin C</u>
	10	25

HARVESTING AND STORAGE

DAYS TO MATURITY: 2-3 years

HARVEST: 3rd year spears, snap off just under soil surface when 6-8 inches tall, before tips begin to separate

APPROXIMATE YIELDS: (per 10 foot row)

3-4 lbs./year

AMOUNT TO RAISE PER PERSON: 6 lbs.

STORAGE: process or refrigerate immediately

PRESERVATION: can or freeze.