



Time and Hints to Take Home

ASPARAGUS

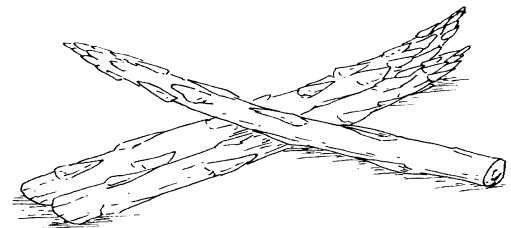
One of the most dependable and permanent home garden vegetables is Asparagus. Plants take 2 to 3 years to come into full production but then provide delicious spears every spring for a lifetime. In addition, the plants are tall, feathery and graceful and add a delightful ornamental effect to the garden.

Purchase and plant Asparagus crowns in the spring. Allow 1 dozen crowns per person in the household. Look for hefty crowns with no sign of rot. Keep the crowns damp and cool until you plant them. It is best to plant them as soon as possible. Soak the crowns for 1-2 hours in a bucket of water before planting.

Asparagus has very specific needs and planting instructions. It prefers very rich soil that is high in all three primary nutrients: nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium. Choose a spot where your Asparagus can grow undisturbed for many years. A site with full sun and good drainage is best. Dig a trench 18" wide and 12-15" deep. Space rows of trenches at least 3' apart. Mix compost or well-rotted manure half and half with the soil from your trench. Mound the improved soil right next to the trench. You will use it to fill in the trench as the plants grow. To start, put about 6" of improved soil in the bottom of the trench and water it well. Place crowns 1' apart and set them so the tops are 6-8" below the top of the trench.

Spread the roots out evenly in a circle. Cover the crowns with 2" of improved soil and water thoroughly again.

As the young plants grow, fill in the trench with the improved soil, taking care not to cover the growing tips. If they have grown 2" high, cover them with 1½" of soil. They grow quickly so you will need to check them every other day. Water deeply whenever the top inch or so of soil dries out. Don't harvest any spears the first year. The object at this time is to build root mass. When the plants turn brown in late fall or early winter, cut all the stems to the ground. The following spring, you can harvest your first spears. Cut for only 4-6 weeks or until the appearance of thin spears (about pencil diameter) indicates that the roots are nearing exhaustion. After that point, allow the plants to grow. Keep weeds in check. Top-dress your rows with compost or well-rotted manure when you are done harvesting. Water your plants all through the growing season even after harvesting stops. After the third year you should be able to cut spears for 8-10 weeks. It is important to stop harvesting and let the plants rejuvenate each



year .
Spears are ready to cut when they are 5-8" long. Cut at a 45° angle to the soil because flat

cutting may injure adjacent developing spears. If asparagus beetle appears during the cutting season, control with rotenone or Malathion (carefully noting label precautions). Top dress Asparagus rows every spring before they come up with compost or well rotted manure at least an inch or more deep. The spears will come up through it. You should not have to divide your Asparagus but you may want to redo your bed every 10 years to revitalize the soil. Good weed control is also important. Mulching with leaves, straw or grass clippings (chemical free only) is a good idea. Plant Land carries the variety 'Jersey Night' Asparagus. 'Jersey Night' is all male and bred to produce an abundance of large spears because they don't have to put energy into seed production.

1008 US HWY 2 EAST, KALISPELL, MT 59901

PHONE: 406-756-7568 * FAX: 406-257-7416

EMAIL: PLANTLAND@MONTANASKY.NET