

MOLES SEEDS

Asparagus (Crowns)

Cultural Leaflet: ZZ510

We hope that your asparagus crowns have reached you in perfect condition and will provide you with plentiful crops for many years to come. As asparagus crowns can deteriorate when out of the soil, we recommend that they are planted on receipt. However if this is not possible, wrap the crowns in damp newspaper, and store in frost-free conditions.

Asparagus crowns combine a high return with a productive life of around 20 years. They require relatively little maintenance, and the crop is suitable for fresh market and roadside sales. F1 hybrid 'all male' varieties are far higher yielding than the traditional types. Crowns are established roots which are lifted and packed immediately before despatch.

Asparagus can also be grown from seed - sow January, germinate between 16-18°C (45-60 seeds per gram), following a 24 hour soak. Transplant in April or early May. Otherwise sow seeds into a seed bed, outdoors, March to early May, and transplant into the final position when large enough.

Site and Soil

As asparagus is a long-term crop, it is very important that the site is selected carefully. Asparagus prefers a rich, free-draining soil, sun and protection from strong winds. It is worth preparing the site well to avoid back-breaking work later, so dig in plenty of compost or manure and remove as many weeds as possible. If you have an acid soil, an application of lime is strongly advised.

Planting

Dig a trench 20cm deep by 30cm wide, and create a small mound down the trench about 7cm high. Sit the crown on the mound, and spread out the roots evenly. Space the crowns 30cm apart within the trench, and space the rows at least 60cm apart. Return the soil to the trench and firm down well.

Looking after your Crop

Hand weed regularly, and do not allow the asparagus to go short of water. Apply a general purpose fertiliser in March, according to the manufacturer's instructions. In Autumn, cut down the ferny stems once they have yellowed, and add a generous amount of compost or manure.

Harvesting

To enable the asparagus to establish, do not harvest during the year of planting, and allow the ferns to develop. However a light crop may be harvested next April to June, and in following years a normal crop can be taken.

Cut the shoots with a sharp knife approximately 7cm below the soil surface. The harvesting period is normally between late April and the third week of June. Try not to harvest too late in the season, as this will weaken the plant and yield will be affected the following year. After harvesting, a light dressing of fertilizer can be applied to give the plants a boost.

Information provided for guidance only, as cultural practices and climatic circumstances vary.

(09/15)

