

How to Grow Asparagus



Delicious asparagus is always better when picked fresh and young! Growing your own will allow you to harvest at just the right stage. However, growing asparagus takes patience, but it is worth the wait!



Plant Selection

You may be tempted to grow asparagus seed due to the cheaper cost; however, seed can take several years to establish. Planting crowns is a time-effective method of growing asparagus, many times being able to harvest the next year! Crowns are typically 1-year-old plants that are in the bareroot state.

Popular varieties for South Dakota include Jersey Knight, Purple Passion, and Mary Washington. Male plants are preferred as they produce smaller spears and do not produce seeds.



Planting, Care and Harvest

Asparagus crowns are planted in the spring. Select an area where you can allow the asparagus to grow perennially. Asparagus prefers well-draining soil and full sun. If space is not limited, plan on planting 10-20 plants per person consuming the asparagus on a regular basis.

Dig a trench 6 inches deep. Place the crowns 9-12" apart, spreading the roots out and ensuring the bud is pointing up. Cover the plants with about 2-3" of soil. As the plants start to grow, add 2-3" of soil periodically as the plants continue to get taller until the trench is filled in.

Keep weeds down to a minimum as you establish your asparagus bed to ensure they are not competing for nutrients, water, and establishment.

Fertilize every spring with *Espoma Garden Food* at a rate of 2 lbs per 100 sq ft for the first 3 years, then switch to fertilizing at the same rate after harvest is complete.

You can begin harvesting in the second season for one week of harvest. The third-year harvest can take place for up to 4 weeks, and every year after, you can harvest for as long as you have spears smaller than 3/8". When harvesting, either cut the spears at a 45-degree angle at the soil line or snap at the ground. Any spears that are too big to harvest can be allowed to grow to the fern stage to store energy for next spring and then cut down in the fall.