

**New Gippsland
Seeds & Bulbs**



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ASPARAGUS CULTURAL NOTES

Asparagus is unique amongst vegetables in that it is a true perennial cropping for 20 or more years from a single planting.

A wide range of soils are suitable for the crop, but it does best in deep well drained loams. Ample water is required in sandy soils, but in other types water is not a major problem. Heavy poorly drained clay soils are not considered suitable for the crop.

The best position for the Asparagus plot is in a sunny well drained position, as crops in shaded sites begin cropping late in the season.

As the crop is such a long term prospect, thorough preparation is both important and sensible. Ensure that perennial weeds like couch, sorrell, nut grass, oxalis and docks etc. are totally removed.

Liming of acid soils so they have a pH reading of around pH 6.5 is recommended, especially in sandy soils.

PLANTING

Plant the crowns at the base of a trench that is around 20cm. (8") deep. Spread the roots evenly out and cover the plant with 5cm. (2") of soil. Gradually fill the trench as the plant grows until the original soil level is reached ensuring that the tips of the young shoots are not covered. Space individual plants 30 to 45 cm. apart.

HARVESTS

Do not cut any spears in the first year after planting from any variety. In the second year only take the first 2 or 3 spears from Mary Washington, but if the UC 157 Hybrid or Purple Pride is used up to 6 or 8 spears can be taken until mid December, when all cutting should cease to allow top growth to replenish the crowns for the following season.

Spears may require cutting every second day in warm conditions, but not as frequently when conditions are cooler. Cut the spears below soil level, usually when the spears are around 15 to 20 cm. long, but before the tips start to open up.

The tops that develop after cutting ceases should be allowed to remain until they turn yellow in late autumn, when they should be cut down and removed. At this stage the bed should be cleaned up and fertilised for the next season.

FEEDING

As Asparagus is such a long term crop, good initial feeding and deep preparation will be beneficial. The incorporation of animal manure, eg. Poultry Manure, using 2 kg. Per square metre will be a good start. Incorporate it as deeply as practical, preferably a week or two before planting. Immediately before planting incorporate 150 grams per square metre of a complete vegetable fertiliser, eg. one with an analysis like NPK 6:6:6: or similar, mixing it thoroughly through the bed, and at least 45 cm. either side of the proposed row. Annual feedings during winter can be a repeat of the above, but only incorporated into the top few centimetres of the bed.

VARIETIES

MARY WASHINGTON 500. A reliable rust resistant variety that has been a main commercial and home garden variety for the past 30 or more years. It is resistant to Asparagus Rust.

SWEET PURPLE. A newer "purple" speared Asparagus. Plants are vigorous with spears being sweet and tender.

UC157 Hybrid A newer hybrid Asparagus that reliably produces both more and larger spears than Mary Washington. Cutting can usually start a year earlier than older types.