

Asparagus



TIP #1

Soil test regularly.

Test soil prior to planting and adjust as necessary. Optimal levels include: 6.5 pH, 250#/ acre phosphorus and 300#/ acre potassium. Apply 70# of nitrogen per acre after harvest. Soil test regularly to maintain fertility levels.

TIP #2

Space crowns 18-24" apart.

Plant 1-year-old crowns, in rows 5-6' wide (the plant will grow out radially) spacing each crown 18-24" apart. A larger harvest will result with an 18" spacing the first few years, but at a higher cost due to the number of additional crowns. After a few years, there will be no difference in yield.

TIP #3

Plant crowns 6" deep.

If soil is sandy, plant 7" deep. A moldboard plow (or similar) produces a good furrow to plant into.

TIP #4

Plant by size of crown.

Separate out large crowns from smaller ones. Plant by size of crown to reduce competition between plants.

TIP #5

Apply DAP into furrow.

Consider applying (by hand) 100#/ acre of DAP directly into the furrow prior to covering the crowns.

TIP #6

Use tractor blade to cover crowns.

Asparagus crowns that have been planted can be covered with soil by using a blade attached to tractor. It will probably take 2 or 3 trips (spread over several weeks) to completely fill in the trench (allow rainfall to help settle the soil between trips).

TIP #7

Consider all-male hybrids.

New Jersey hybrids and Canadian hybrids are all male. These plants do not sacrifice energy to produce seed, thus yields are higher than the old standard Mary Washington variety.

TIP #8

Hand snap spears.

Hand snapping results in a higher quality product, as 100% of the crop is edible. Cutting with a knife results in woody plant material on the lower portion of the spear, which is inedible.

TIP #9

Harvest in the a.m.

Harvest in the morning, before field heat begins to build. Asparagus can be stored in a cool (36 degrees optimal) dark space, placed upright in shallow water.

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