

Asparagus



Sun: Plant in full sun (6 to 8 hours). Starting from year-old crowns is recommended. Space 12 inches apart in rows. Plant in early spring.

Soil: Amend with organic matter to create a well-drained soil. Avoid planting in unamended sandy or heavy clay soils. If the soil test shows the pH is below 6.2, apply lime as recommended.

Water: Keep soil consistently moist, but not saturated. Apply 1 to 2 inches of water each week and more during hot summer days. Avoid wetting leaves to avoid fungal diseases. Mulch helps retain moisture.

Plant: For crowns, dig trench 12 inches wide and deep. Set crowns in trench 12 to 15 inches apart. Spread the roots and cover with 3 inches of soil. As the plants begin to grow, pull the soil around the crowns until the trench is filled.

Fertilize: In the absence of a soil test, apply an all-purpose fertilizer (8-8-8 or 10-10-10) at planting, according to label directions. Reapply 4 to 6 inches from the stem (side-dress), 4 to 6 weeks after planting.

Insects/Diseases/Weeds: Scout plants frequently for insect and disease damage. Use insecticidal soap (for soft-bodied insects) or Bt dust or spray (for caterpillars, or worms). Spray fungicide regularly to suppress common fungal diseases. Always follow label instructions. Mulch inhibits weeds and diseases.

Harvest: Harvest in the second year. When spears are 5 to 7 inches tall, harvest daily for about 2 weeks and immediately refrigerate. In the third and fourth year, harvest may continue for 4 weeks. After the fourth year, harvest for 6 to 8 weeks, until spears become thin and spindly. These spears should be left to generate asparagus ferns, which will die back after the first frost.

Other: Asparagus is a perennial vegetable that does well in Alabama and is adaptable to freezer storage.

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