

Winter

Plant Now

Asparagus

Planting information by garden writer
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Asparagus lovers will be wowed by the fact you can grow five different varieties of asparagus at home - fat, purple, white, tiny tips and thin green spears. Is it the spears' mythical aphrodisiac qualities that have you coming back for more?

Growing instructions



Establish your own asparagus bed this winter by planting the crowns out now (or sow seeds in spring), practice a little patience

(beds take 3 years to establish), and then harvest succulent tasty spears for the next 20 years! Find a spot with good drainage in an open sheltered position. But don't think you can just squeeze one in – you will need a whole bed or a large container dedicated to growing asparagus!

In the kitchen

Stand the fresh spears upright in a container with 1cm of water and store it in the refrigerator, or wrap the spears in a paper towel, or a clean damp tea towel, then store in a plastic bag in the crisper section of their refrigerator for up to 5 days.

Growing tips

- Dig a trench 30cm wide x 20cm deep. In the bottom, make a 10cm mound and place the crowns on top, spreading the roots either side, then cover with 5cm of soil. As the stems grow, gradually cover them with soil. By autumn the trench will be filled with soil.
- Asparagus will also grow in a large tub. When it dies down in winter, add about 15 cm mulch or good potting mix, then plant winter flowering annuals and the asparagus spears will poke through the flowers in spring.
- When the season begins, spears may only need to be cut every third or fourth day, but as the season progresses and temperatures rise, spears must be harvested daily.
- Pick spears in spring when the new shoots poke through the soil. The trick to growing asparagus is patience. Leave skinny stems to grow into long feathery fronds and feed the roots for next year's crop.
- Don't be tempted to harvest spears until the third year after planting. Wait until the spears are 10 – 15 cm long and cut on an angle under the surface of the soil with a sharp knife. Leave one spear uncut to grow into a fern, this will help restore the plant's energy and prolong next season's harvest.
- The harvest lasts for six weeks the first year and eight weeks the next year. Do not harvest after midsummer or you will get thin spears the next year.