

# ASPARAGUS PLANTING GUIDE

Unpack the crowns immediately, if you're not planting straight away place crown in a box or seed tray and surround the roots with moist compost. Do not allow the roots to dry out.

**General** – Good drainage is essential for successful asparagus growing. Do not plant crowns in cold wet soil: prolonged exposure to these conditions will not help establishment and may kill the crown

**Soil Conditions** – If your soil is very wet try, by digging the soil inward, to raise the bed, whilst leaving a trench round the outside. This way it will dry out and warm up slightly quicker. Break down the soil and form the trenches only when you know you are ready to plant. Only plant when the soil is friable. Make a fist of the soil, let it go and it should crumble a little.

**Fertilisers** – Apply as much organic manure as you can dig in. Apply a balanced fertiliser, such as pelleted chicken manure at the manufacturers recommended rate. Be sure that the pH (acid balance) of your soil is not below 6.2.

**Preparation** – Breakdown the seedbed to 20cm(8”) depth. Mark and draw out furrows in the bed to 15cm(6”) deep and 30cm(12”) wide. In the bottom of the furrow create a small ridge on which to place the crown. The width between the furrows should be at a minimum of 45cm(2ft6”).

**Planting** – Plant crowns by placing crown, with buds upwards on the small ridge in the base of the furrow, arranging roots to either side. Plant at 30cm(1ft) centres. Replace 10cm(4”) of soil over crowns, leaving a small trench marking the row; being careful not to tread on the row. Later once the spears have emerged and the soil has settled, place more soil over the crowns, leaving just a small groove in which to water if necessary. Do not allow the base of the furrow to dry out.

## WARNING – DO NOT CUT SPEARS IN THE FIRST YEAR

Cut lightly in the second year. In subsequent years harvest spears at 5/7” tall. Cutting just below the soil surface, cropping can continue for approximately 8 weeks, after which the ferns should be allowed to grow and build up the crowns – food reserves. When the foliage turns yellow in autumn it should be cut down to ground level and the soil mounded up over the crowns.

**Pests** – Rabbits will like the tender shoots if there is not much else around. Pets will like to sit in the trench and will damage the spears. Deer may cause physical damage. Slugs love young shoots – take precautions early.

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