



URI COLLEGE OF THE
ENVIRONMENT AND LIFE
SCIENCES (CELS) OUTREACH
CENTER

3 East Alumni Avenue
Kingston, Rhode Island 02881

For more information:

Call:

In RI: URI MGA Hotline
1-800-448-1011
Mon.-Thurs. 9:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m.

In MA and CT: 401-874-2900

Outside New England please
contact Cooperative Extension in
your county.

Websites:

URI Master Gardener Association
www.urimga.org

CELS Outreach Center
www.uri.edu/cels/ceo

ASPARAGUS

Asparagus is easy to grow in the home garden and is a vegetable that is high in vitamins A, B, and C and is well suited for freezing,

Soil and Fertilization

The ideal soil for growing asparagus is a deep, sandy loam. Because an asparagus planting will remain in the same location for 10 to 15 years it is important to verify the fertility of the soil before the crowns are set. During the late summer of the year before the crowns are to be set, make a heavy application of manure and 5 pounds of 10-10-10 fertilizer for each 100 square feet. Spade or plow the manure and fertilizer into the soil to a depth of 10 inches. The soil should be tested for lime requirements the year before the crowns are set. Asparagus prefers a pH of about 6.5.

Planting

It is best to obtain strong, well grown, one-year-old plants for planting. (The roots of two-year-old plants are often seriously mutilated when dug.) Plant in early to mid-spring when plants are still dormant. To set the plants, open a furrow 8 inches deep and 10 inches wide. If the layer of fertile soil is not 8 inches deep, then a more shallow trench must be dug. Loosen the soil in the bottom of the trench and leave it a little higher in the center. Place the crowns in the trench about 12-18 inches apart, taking care to spread roots uniformly. If more than one row is planted have rows 4-6 feet apart. Cover the crowns with 1 or 2 inches of soil and firm well around the roots. When growth begins, fill soil gradually around the shoots and by mid-summer the trench will be completely filled.

Care and Harvesting

After the asparagus has been set, keep the area free of weeds. Let the stalks grow and stand over winter, as they will provide a mulch.

In the second season, during the first part of March, old dead stalks should be cut down. Apply a good coat of well-rotted manure or compost as well as a 10-10-10 fertilizer (3 pounds for each 100 square feet of area) over and between the rows. The manure and fertilizer should be worked into the soil to a depth of 3 inches. Apply 2 pounds of nitrogen fertilizer for each 100 square feet of row at the end of June. Keep the planting free of weeds. Do not harvest any asparagus the second year.

PESTICIDES ARE POISONOUS!! Read and follow all safety precautions on labels. Handle carefully and store in original containers out of reach of children, pets, or livestock. Dispose of empty containers immediately, in a safe manner and place. Pesticides should never be stored with foods or in areas where people eat.

When trade names are used for identification, no product endorsement is implied, nor is discrimination intended against similar materials. Be sure that the pesticide that you wish to use is registered in the state of use.

The user of this information assumes all risk for personal injury or property damage.

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Rhode Island Cooperative Extension provides equal program and employment opportunities. U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating.

Note: The Hotline is open Monday—Thursday, 9:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m. from March 1 to November 1.



Care during the third year (first harvest year) should be as in the second season. Increase the nitrogen application to 3 pounds per 100 feet of row. Harvest the asparagus spears when they reach 8 inches in length. Growth will soon become extremely rapid and harvesting will need to be done each day. Cut all spears for a period of about 4 weeks, and then allow the spears to grow. If the soil is compacted at the end of the harvest period, rework as in the spring.

Established plantings should be cared for as in the third season. The harvest season can be lengthened to 6-7 weeks.

Use a sharp knife and cut about 1 inch below the surface of the soil. Be careful to avoid knife injury to emerging stalks. Do not walk or step on the row during the harvesting process.

Pests

The most important pests on asparagus plants are the common asparagus beetle and the spotted asparagus beetle. Early control of beetles is important to reduce feeding damage later. Rotenone or Sevin will provide control (a one-day wait before harvest is required).