

URBAN FARMER

LOVE THE EARTH

How to: Grow Asparagus Roots

Asparagus is a unique vegetable to grow in your garden, a perennial that returns year after year once it has been established and can produce asparagus for up to 20 years. However, the process for growing asparagus is lengthy and the time entailed in growing asparagus roots can scare gardeners away.

Asparagus is a member of the fern family, and the parts that are eaten are the shoots before the plant becomes a fern.

Asparagus takes up to three years to grow from seed until it is ready for harvest, but the wait is well worth it – the result being a hardy vegetable that returns again and again as long as it is cared for. Gardeners can purchase pre-grown asparagus roots which shortens the wait time by a year, but it is also quite possible to grow your own from seed. If purchased from seed, plant the asparagus four weeks before the last frost.

Getting started:

If the roots are purchased as one-year-old roots, make sure the asparagus bed is supplemented with plenty of soil and test the soil pH, as asparagus thrives best in soil with a pH of 7.0. Asparagus roots require a thick layer of soil to protect them from the elements. Dig a trench in the asparagus bed that measures 1 foot deep and 18 inches wide. If planting more than one trench worth of asparagus, leave 4 feet between trenches.

Planting the roots:

Once the trench is established, break up the soil up to 10 inches deep. Add ½ pound of 10-10-10 fertilizer to each 10-foot stretch of trench. Add 4 inches of compost in the



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bottom of the trench to feed the roots. Firm up the soil in the bottom of the trench by firmly pressing it or walking on it, as this gives the roots a solid base to grow on. Fan out the roots along the trench and space them 2 feet apart. Plant the roots, also called crowns, in the spring as soon as the soil can be worked. Cover them gently with 2 inches of soil.

Caring for the roots:

As summer arrives, continuously pull in more soil to add to the trench until it is level. Leave only a few inches of the asparagus shoots above ground at a time. Once the trench is full, mulch the asparagus bed, as this will help retain moisture and deter weeds. Every few months, apply a dressing of 10-10-10 fertilizer to the asparagus beds, using one handful for each plant. While the plants are young, they require plenty of watering. Water the plants regularly.



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Cut the plants to the ground each year, and this can be done in the spring or the fall. Removing dead foliage in the fall prevents pest problems, but some gardeners opt to leave the dead foliage as winter mulch and cut the plants down in the spring instead. Do not harvest the roots for the first two years if they have been purchased as one-year-old roots, and when you do harvest, keep the harvest to a minimum.

You can find everything you need to grow asparagus roots on our website at [ufseeds.com!](http://ufseeds.com)



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