

Asparagus

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Asparagus (*Asparagus officinalis*) is a highly desirable, early spring vegetable. Keep in mind, asparagus will not produce well in areas with mild winters and hot summers. While it takes 2 to 3 years for the crown to reach full production, with proper care and a suitable climate, an asparagus crown can last 15 to 25 years.

Grow it

Varieties

- 'Martha Washington,' 'UC 157,' or 'Jersey Giant'

Soil Preparation

- In late fall, spread a 3-inch layer of organic matter over the beds. Till or spade them to a depth of 10 to 12 inches, and turn the soil to cover all organic matter.
- Incorporate ½ cup of 15-5-10 per 20 feet of row.

Planting

- Buy healthy, vigorous, 1- or 2-year-old crowns from a nursery, garden center, or seed catalog.
- Plant crowns in January or February.
- Mark rows 5 feet apart. Dig each furrow 4 inches wide and 4 to 6 inches deep in heavy soil or 6 to 12 inches deep in loose soil.
- Place the crowns 12 to 14 inches apart in each furrow.
- Fill in the furrows with soil to their original level, careful not to compact the soil.



Fertilizing

- For established beds, scatter 4 cups of 15-5-10 fertilizer per 20 feet of row before growth begins in late January or early February. Always water the fertilizer into the soil.
- After the last harvest in April or May, apply an additional 2 cups of 21-0-0 fertilizer per 20 feet of row.

Care During the Season

- Water the beds thoroughly, and allow the top 1 inch of soil to dry before watering again.
- Keep weeds pulled or hoed from the beds. To suppress weeds, spread a 4- to 6-inch-thick layer of organic mulch over the rows.
- After the first hard frost or freeze, cut off the fern tops at ground level and mulch the bed. In southern areas, the fern may not be killed by a freeze, so it should be removed in late November when the ferns turn yellow.

Insects and Diseases

- Asparagus beetles can damage plants if left unmanaged. Crown rot and rusts are common diseases that attack asparagus.
- For information on controlling pests and disease, contact your county Extension agent.

Harvesting

- Do not harvest during the first 2 years after planting to allow the underground crown to grow.
- Asparagus spears from established beds should be harvested between late February and early May.
- Harvest the spears when they are 4 to 10 inches long by snapping them off by hand at ground level.
- To prevent the spears from becoming fibrous, harvest at least every other day.
- Spears with loose or opened heads are too mature.
- Stop harvesting when the spear diameter becomes less than ¾ inch.



Sun:
Full



Soil:
Deep,
Well-
drained



Planting:
Jan.-Feb.



Harvest:
Late Feb.-
Early May



Life Cycle:
Perennial

Buy it

- Choose stalks that are firm and odorless, not limp or wilted.
- Make sure tips are dry and tight.

Store it

- Wrap the tip-ends of asparagus stalks in a wet paper towel and place them in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for up to 4 days.
- For canning and preservation instructions, visit nchfp.uga.edu.

Use it

Salmon Bowtie Pasta

Course: Main Dish

Serves: 8

Ingredients:

Pasta

- 1 lb fresh salmon filet
- 1 lb bowtie pasta, uncooked
- 1 lb fresh asparagus, spears trimmed and cut into 1-inch pieces
- 2 cups frozen peas

Dressing

- ¼ cup olive oil
- Juice from 1 lemon
- ½ tsp salt
- ½ tsp pepper
- ¼ cup fresh dill, chopped
- ¼ cup parmesan cheese, grated

Instructions:

Wash your hands and clean your preparation area. Rinse asparagus spears under cool water.

Preheat your oven to 400°F.

Line a cookie sheet with aluminum foil. Place salmon skin-side down on the cookie sheet and bake for 20 minutes or until salmon reaches an internal temperature of 145°F.

While the salmon is baking, whisk together the olive oil, lemon juice, salt, pepper, and dill in a small bowl.

Boil a pot of water to cook the pasta according to the package directions. During the last 3 minutes of the pasta boiling, add in the asparagus and peas. Drain and place in large serving bowl and toss with the olive oil dressing.

Flake the salmon into pieces. Remove the pieces from the skin and place them in the serving bowl with the pasta. Toss to combine and coat with dressing. Serve immediately.

Parmesan Asparagus

Course: Side Dish

Serves: 8

Ingredients:

- 2 lb asparagus, rinsed and trimmed
- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- ¼ cup parmesan cheese, grated
- ¼ cup whole wheat panko bread crumbs
- ½ tsp onion powder
- ¼ tsp paprika

Instructions:

Heat oven to 350°F.

Place asparagus into a large baking dish and drizzle olive oil evenly over asparagus.

Roast asparagus for 15 to 20 minutes or until tender.

While asparagus is roasting, combine panko bread crumbs, paprika, onion powder, and parmesan cheese in a small bowl.

Remove asparagus from oven and lightly sprinkle with seasoned bread crumb mixture.

Return to oven for 5 more minutes or until bread crumbs begin to lightly brown. Remove from oven and serve.

Learn about it

- Asparagus is free of fat, saturated fat, sodium, and cholesterol.
- They are low calorie and are a good source of vitamins A and C and are high in folate.

Information gathered by Aggie Horticulture

