



ASPARAGUS

WHEN:

Asparagus Crowns like to be planted in warmer soil so the best time to plant is in Spring when soil temperatures are rising. For the North Island this means from mid-September to mid-October. Planting in cold, wet soil often results in the death of the plant.

WHERE:

Asparagus likes deep well drained soil free of compaction. Best soil is sandy or free drained volcanic soil. If you have clay like soil make sure you can add enough organic matter so that you can get a planting depth of 150- 200mm.

Asparagus likes compost, prefers a higher ph level as well as higher levels of superphosphate.

HOW:

Dig a trench approx 20cm deep with a flat bottom 20 cm across. Plant crowns along one side of the trench placing each crown 20cm apart. Plant another row of crowns along the other side of the trench but in the gaps of the first row. Do not full the trench but cover the crowns with 5cm of loose soil. During summer and autumn slowly fill the trench with soil. By the following winter the trench should be filled with soil and be flat again.

OTHER IMPORTANT STUFF:

It's essential that you don't pick any spears in the first year otherwise you can weaken your plants.

Let the spears grow into the feathery fern stage. While they're still green, they are feeding their crowns and strong crowns are the secret to success. Once the fern has completely died off and turned brown cut the dead fern off at ground level.

FIRST HARVEST:

Normally this takes 2 years from planting the crowns. If the crowns grow really well in the first year and spears emerge that are really fat, 15mm in diameter or bigger, these can be picked one year after planting (keeping in mind the point above about these stalks being feeders). This bonus harvest will last two weeks.

Your first real harvest will last between 3-5 weeks and harvests in successive years normally last between 6-10 weeks.

While you might have to wait awhile to eat the little blighters a bed of crowns provided they are well cared for can last up to 20 years.