

family
**Vegetable
Garden**
series

EXTENSION BULLETIN E-824 (14)

Asparagus and Rhubarb

~ Garden Perennials ~

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YEAR AFTER YEAR —

Try planting asparagus and rhubarb this spring. They are perennials, which means they will come back every year.

SAVE \$\$

Asparagus is expensive to buy, and not always fresh. Why not grow your own! Once you plant it, asparagus will come up for many, many years.



Asparagus can be planted in rows, or separately. Soil must be well-drained. The disease-resistant variety Mary Washington is recommended.

FOR DESSERT...

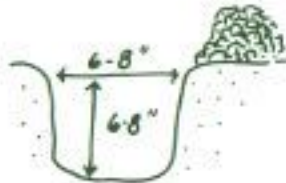
Rhubarb is also called pieplant. It will grow almost anywhere in your yard, just like asparagus. Some recommended varieties are Canada Red, MacDonald, Valentine and Victoria.

Buy asparagus and rhubarb crowns (plants 1 year old or older) at garden centers, or through seed or nursery catalogs.

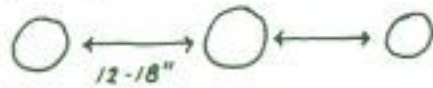


GROWING ASPARAGUS

Plant crowns in the spring. Dig a trench or holes 6 to 8 in. deep.



Mix in 2 cups of 5-20-20 fertilizer per 10 ft. of row, or use 1/4 cup per plant.



Space crowns 12 to 18 in. apart, and spread out roots. Make rows 3 to 5 ft. apart.

Cover crowns with 2 in. of soil. As new shoots grow, fill in soil around them, but don't cover tips of shoots. Water well.



After the first year, fertilize plants when growth starts in spring, and again in July, at least until plants are well-established. Use 1/2 cup of 5-20-20 fertilizer per 10 ft. of row or per 10 plants.

Leave tops on plants to protect them through winter, but cut off before growth starts in spring.



HARVEST

Do not harvest asparagus the first year after planting. You may be able to harvest for a few weeks the second year if plants produce big enough spears. You may have to wait til the 3rd or 4th year for a large harvest. Do not harvest spears thinner than a pencil. Do not harvest after July 1.

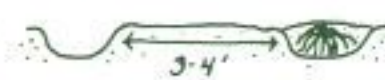
Harvest spears before buds open by snapping them off or by cutting at the soil surface. Cutting below this may injure new spears coming up.



Figure 8 plants per person.

GROWING RHUBARB

Plant rhubarb crowns early in the spring. Work 1/4 cup of 5-20-20 fertilizer per crown into the soil.



Plant so that top of crown is near soil surface. Leave 3 to 4 ft. between plants, and 4 ft. between rows.

Firm soil around roots. Leave 1 in. of loose soil over buds.

After the first year, fertilize each plant with 1/2 cup of 5-20-20 every spring and again in July.

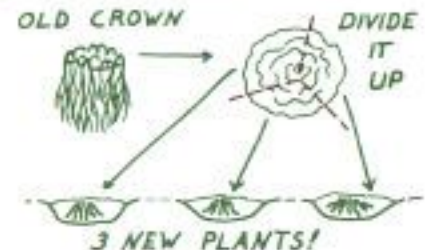
Water rhubarb in dry spells, especially the first few years.



Break off flower stalks by pulling and twisting, so more leaf stalks form.

DIVIDE THE CROWNS

If stalks get spindly in 5-10 years, fertilize more. If this doesn't help, dig up crowns. Divide into 2 to 4 equal parts. Plant these like your first plants, in early spring.



Eat only the stalks!
The leaves are poisonous!

HARVEST

Do not harvest rhubarb the first year after planting. You may be able to harvest a few stalks the 2nd year, if plants are growing very well. If they are not, wait til the 3rd or 4th year. Never remove more than 1/3 of a plant's stalks at a time. Do not harvest after July 1.



Harvest stalks when long enough. To harvest, twist the stalk while pulling it sideways. Do not cut the stalks.

One plant per person is enough.

IN THE KITCHEN

LOW IN CALORIES

ASPARAGUS tastes delicious, is low in calories, and rich in vitamins A, B and C.

Cooked asparagus spears are very good with butter, hollandaise or cheese sauce. Use them in dishes made with cheese or cream sauce. Or add them to chicken casserole. Cream of asparagus soup is great, too.

For a change, try raw asparagus with your favorite dip.



SWEET STUFF

In strawberry jello, cooked chunks of **RHUBARB** taste a lot like strawberries — and they're a lot cheaper!

Rhubarb makes delicious pie and sauce. It's great in jello, jams and jellies. Try substituting rhubarb for apples in apple crisp or in apple-cinnamon cakes.

Remember — Don't eat the leaves!



KEYS TO SUCCESS

- Plant early in the spring.
- Get plants well established before harvesting.
- Harvest correctly.

Other bulletins in this series provide additional information on vegetable gardening.

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