

blackmoor

Blackmoor

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Dear customer,

Thank you for ordering from Blackmoor Nurseries. We trust you will be pleased with your plants and by following our growing guide below we hope you have many years of success with them. Our plants have been professionally grown on our Nursery with the correct attention to nutrients, and pest and disease control. They are despatched in good condition ready to establish and thrive in your garden for many years to come.

Please unpack and inspect your plants immediately on arrival.

CARE GUIDE FOR ASPARAGUS

SELECTING A SITE

It is essential to choose a site with uniform soil conditions and good drainage, as asparagus is a long-term crop that can last up to 20 years. Early asparagus spears can be damaged by frost so frost pockets must be avoided. Although asparagus can be grown in many soil types they have extensive root systems and therefore, for maximum development, the ideal site should be a deep dug, rich free draining soil.

SOIL PREPARATION

It is important that the soil is totally free of perennial weeds prior to planting, as weeding will become difficult once the growth has developed. In the autumn, prior to spring planting, incorporate good quality farmyard manure. If you are planting a large area with asparagus it is advisable to carry out pH and nutrient tests to ensure that the pH is between the ideal 6.5 and 7 (add lime if necessary) and that there is a balanced nutrient level present. For smaller areas within the ideal pH of 6.5 and 7 an annual application of a general fertiliser will be adequate. If your soil is heavy either plant in raised beds these should be a minimum 60 cm (2 ft) deep or incorporate clean sharp/horticultural sand, which will improve drainage.

PLANTING – IT IS ESSENTIAL TO PLANT THE CROWNS WITHIN 24 HOURS OF DELIVERY

If this is not possible lay the crowns out on a seed tray and lightly cover with moist compost and keep in a dark frost-free place. **Do not pre-soak the bare root crowns prior to planting as they are liable to rot.**

Plant spacing can be either:

1 m (40") between rows planted 30 cm (12") or 90 cm (36") between rows planted 45 cm (18")

There are two ways of growing asparagus either in a ridged row, which will assist with drainage or a flatbed but for both methods trenches are opened out 20 cm (8") deep and the roots of the crowns are spread evenly in the base of the trench either on the 7.5cm (3") ridged row or flat with the buds pointing upwards (take care not to damage the buds as they are the growing tips). After planting the crowns should be covered with loose soil, so the entire bed remains flat. For ridged row system a small ridge may then be formed during the 2 years that they are establishing.

Keep the beds clean and hoe regularly - do not allow weeds to smother the crop.

HARVESTING

Resist the temptation to harvest any spears in the first year – leave them to fern. The spears can be cut sparingly in the second year after planting but you should stop cropping at the end of May. In subsequent years it may continue until the 21st June. Cut the spear when they are 20 cm (8”) above the ground and cut 2½ cm (1”) below the soil level.

AFTERCARE

After cropping allow the asparagus to fern, which feeds the crowns. Apply a light dressing of nitrogenous fertiliser, which will help them develop strong fern growth. Do not over feed asparagus, as you will encourage soft fern growth. If necessary support them with bamboos and soft twine.

Allow the fern to die off naturally – this normally occurs after the first frosts but do not remove the fern until it is completely brittle, this maybe as late as February. Whilst removing the fern also clean up the bed by hand avoiding making deep cultivations as these may damage the crowns and their roots.

PESTS AND DISEASES

Asparagus beetle is the main pest and you should pick off the beetles and larvae when you see them and burn the dried ferns after you have removed them to avoid them over-wintering. Asparagus suffer with violet root rot which can be avoided if they are grown in well-drained soil.

This guide is for general information purposes only as site and soil conditions and requirements vary greatly.