

# ASPARAGUS IN ARIZONA

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## A Crop Well Suited to Arizona Conditions—Starting the Plantation— Problems Met With in the Commercial Field—A Local Market Readily Available

**A**SPARAGUS is a crop well suited to Southwestern conditions both of climate and of soil. Asparagus is resistant to our extreme heat, endures drouth well, and prospers with amounts of alkali in the soil prohibitive to many other crops. Rich, sandy loam, soil heavily fertilized with barnyard manure is best for asparagus. In preparing a field for asparagus the ground should be made level for short rows in order to secure thorough penetration of the water supply to the extensive root system of the plant.

Asparagus roots should be planted at least 8 to 10 inches deep since the crown develops a little higher each year and unless deep planting is practiced it is only a few years until the crown would be injured by the harrow and cultivator. On light soils planting 12 to 15 inches deep is not uncommon. In planting a commercial bed, deep furrows are opened by running a turnplow two or four times where each row is to be located. The rows should be four or five feet apart. After the furrow is opened the roots are set in every other row, 18 to 30 inches apart in the row. The roots are placed in the bottom of the furrow and at first covered to the depth of 2 to 3 inches. Soil is added as the plants grow until by the end of the season the furrow is filled. The filling in of the furrow is done as the land is cultivated. The crowns should not be covered to the extreme depth at first as the young shoots may be smothered before they reach the surface. Every other furrow having been left vacant can be used for irrigation. When the asparagus comes up it is in the center of a ridge and the rows of asparagus are 8 to 10 feet apart.

Although asparagus endures drouth its profitable culture requires frequent irrigation, ordinarily not less than twice a month during the growing season. During the cutting season weekly irrigations are advisable.

Each irrigation should be followed by cultivation. The crop should be fertilized each year immediately after the cutting season is over. This may be accomplished by opening out furrows, right and left, in spaces be-

tween rows filling them in with well-rotted barnyard manure and then covering back again. After the first season the asparagus bed should be thoroughly disked and harrowed each spring. Cultivation and hoeing is necessary to keep down weeds after the bed is established as well as during the first season. In all tillage preparations care must be exercised to prevent injury to the crowns of the plants.

In southern Arizona the commercial cutting season begins around the middle of March and lasts two months or until the middle of May. During the first and second years of an asparagus bed no shoots should be cut, and even during the third year the cutting season should be short. Asparagus is usually harvested every day during the main portion of the cutting season, but if the weather is cold every other day, or even third day may be often enough. In cutting the asparagus care must be taken to avoid injuring the crown and other shoots. At the close of the growing season the asparagus should be cut and burned when the berries are red. The ground can then be disked to destroy all weeds present.

Argenteuil and Palmetto are two good varieties to plant as they are resistant to the asparagus rust. These two varieties are tender and palatable and have very little waste. Asparagus rust is the only serious disease of asparagus in the U. S. The disease appears on the plant as small, reddish-yellow spots on the main stem and on the branches. As the disease develops, the spots enlarge into patches until the whole plant has a reddish-brown or orange color.

The damage done by asparagus rust is not seen directly in the marketed product, but reduces the yield by weakening the plants during the summer after the cutting season is over and often killing them. No practicable measure has been developed for this disease except the use of rust-resistant varieties.

The length of time an asparagus bed will produce profitable yields depends upon the treatment it receives and to some extent the depth of planting. The deeper the roots are planted

the longer it will take for the crowns to come near enough to the surface to be injured by harrowing. A well-established bed, which receives good cultivation to keep down weeds, and good fertilizing each year should produce profitable crops for fifteen years. In practice, however, it is usually found desirable to renew the planting about every ten years. Of course, a new bed should have been started in another location some years previous to the time the old bed is destroyed, in order to have a supply of asparagus every year. Asparagus should be planted in every home garden, being well-suited both to irrigated conditions and to the dry farmers' homestead. It can be grown in some quantity in the vicinity of small towns and cities, where it is always in demand. With markets assured the crop should be a profitable one in Arizona and worthy of a place on every intensively cultivated farm.

### A SOME DATA ON THE DAIRY SITUATION

There are approximately 350,000 cows in cow-testing associations in the U. S. at the present time.

The average production per cow in this country is estimated to be about 4,500 pounds of milk, while the cow-testing association cows averaged 7,272 pounds.

The 350,000 cow-testing association cows produce as much milk as 560,000 average cows of this country.

The average cow is not good enough. The successful dairyman must have better than the average.

### A A SPLENDID RECORD

Noble's Golden Betsy, purebred Jersey in the herd of the Chesney Farm, has recently completed her first lactation period with a production of 10,508 pounds of milk containing 543.3 pounds of fat, equivalent to 679 pounds of 80 per cent butter. Betsy was 2 years, 1 month, and 17 days old when she freshened. She should be a record maker when she matures.

Aunt Ada's Axioms: We need more real homemakers and less housekeepers.