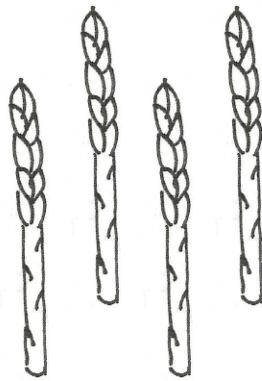


## Renfrow Hardware

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# Asparagus

*Fresh, homegrown asparagus tastes about a zillion times better than its grocery store counterpart.*

Asparagus is the queen of garden vegetables, requiring more weeding and pampering than most members of your backyard food supply, but we think that you will find that the challenge reaps delicious rewards.

**Variety & Quantity:** Renfrow's has the variety Jersey Giant available in bundles of 20 to 25 crowns. One to two bundles is usually enough for a family, but if you have multiple avid asparagus eaters, you may want to expand your patch as large as you can spare! The crowns arrive in late January or early February for mid-winter planting. They are two-year-old crowns that will need another two or three years after planting to grow before you should begin harvesting. We advise that you grow these only if you are in a long-term garden plot due to the time and commitment necessary for this vegetable

**Site selection:** Asparagus crowns need to be planted in your sunniest, richest soil; plan on the bed being there for 25 to 50 years. Dig your bed as deeply as you reasonably can and mix in lots of organic matter (what garden plant doesn't ask for that!). Space your crowns 2 - 2 ½ feet apart and bury about 2 inches deep.

**Care:** In the first year, after the spears poke out of the ground, top-dress with another inch or two of soil around the bed so that the roots will be safe in the winter months. Fertilize your patch with organic Plant-Tone fertilizer each spring and fall and keep everything mulched with leaves to discourage weeds. They *must* remain weed-free to provide healthy yields. Asparagus benefits from a light feeding of magnesium sulfate (agricultural Epsom salt) each fall.

**Harvest:** The asparagus shoots emerge as the normal-looking shoot and then they transform into beautiful fernlike fronds that photosynthesize all summer, storing up energy to create the following spring's spears. Cut the fronds down after they have been killed by the frost. After two or three years' wait, you may harvest and eat your spears for around three weeks. Check your patch and harvest spears almost daily when they are around 8 inches tall, before they start opening into fronds - at that point, they will be too tough to eat. Snap or cut off at base of plant. After several meals, it is time to let the next shoots develop into fronds and store up energy for the following spring's harvest.