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SUCCESSFUL ASPARAGUS PLANTING

Need:

Rich, well-drained soil—Covington's Soil Builder w/Shale
Ferti-lome Gardener's Special (11-15-11)

Asparagus crowns
Hi-Yield Ammonium Sulphate (21-0-0)

A few basic facts about asparagus:

- An asparagus planting can last for ten to twenty years in North Texas - possibly more!
- Asparagus is planted from 1-year old "root crowns" planted in January or February
- It requires three years from the time asparagus crowns are planted until the bed is in full production. Limit prior harvesting until the bed has matured.

Soil Preparation:

Asparagus does best in a deep, well-drained soil with full sun (minimum 6 hours). Since an asparagus planting lasts many years, proper soil preparation is essential for long-term success. When preparing an asparagus bed, till in at least a 3" layer of Covington's Soil Builder which includes expanded shale, and blend thoroughly with the existing soil. Asparagus grows well in a high pH soil, so it tolerates our normal soil and water pH very well.

Fertilizing:

Before planting a new asparagus bed, till in two to three pounds of Ferti-lome Gardener's Special per 20" of row. For established asparagus beds, fertilize with the same Gardener's Special before growth starts in the spring, (late Jan. to early Feb.) Feed an additional one to two pounds of Hi-Yield Ammonium Sulphate after the last harvest of the season per 20' of row, and water all fertilizers in. Low soil fertility can cause fibrous, tough spears.

Planting:

After asparagus beds are tilled, mark rows 4' apart. Dig a furrow 4" wide and 6" deep. Place the crowns in the furrows 12-14" apart and cover with 2" of soil, and firm the soil around the roots. Do not fill the entire furrow at once. Fill the furrows gradually as the shoots grow. This covers small weeds, and they'll die from lack of light - make sure the asparagus plant's own greenery is not completely covered as the plant grows. By the end of the first season, the furrow reaches its normal level just below the soil surface.

Watering:

Asparagus plants like frequent, deep watering. Water the beds thoroughly as needed, allowing the top 1" of soil to dry before watering again.

Harvesting:

Asparagus should not be harvested the first year, but only have the browned tops cut off after they go dormant in the Fall. The second year, it is acceptable to harvest 2-3 spears per plant by cutting the spears roughly 1" below the soil line to prevent the formation of woody stumps on the soil surface, but only harvest the first four weeks. The third and all following years, you'll be able to harvest 8-12 spears a harvest season per plant by harvesting throughout the first 6 to 8 weeks the plant puts out greenery. Harvest spears between 4 to 10" long, and harvest at least every other day during the harvest season, which begins when the plant first puts on greenery in the later winter/early spring. Harvest spears with nice, tight heads - loosely formed heads are overmature and likely to be very tough. Discontinue harvest when the spear diameter becomes less than 3/8 of an inch.