



# ASPARAGUS

## What is It?

- Asparagus is part of the asparagaceae family and is related to several popular flowers, like bluebells, hyacinths, and hostas.
- While green asparagus is most common, it can also be white or purple!
- Asparagus plants can live at least 25 years but have been known to live up to 100 years.



## Grow It

- Asparagus stems are called “spears.” Rather than planting asparagus seeds, many gardeners purchase and plant asparagus “crowns,” which are one-year-old asparagus root systems. After planting, it takes three years for asparagus spears to be ready for a heavy harvest. Mature plants can grow up to 10 inches in one day!
- Here are some asparagus growing tips from the Washington State University Master Gardener program:
  - Plant asparagus crowns early in the spring.
  - Choose a sunny garden spot to plant your crowns.
  - Do not pick spears in the first year after planting so they can establish strong roots. They will grow into tall bushy ferns which can be left in place.
  - During the second year, spears can be lightly harvested when they are about eight inches tall by cutting stems just above the soil level. This should only be done for a period of three weeks. After that, spears should be left to mature in place.
  - During the third year, harvest similarly, but for up to six weeks
  - In the fourth and subsequent years, harvest spears for about eight weeks. Yield will increase each year for the first seven or eight years and will begin to decline slightly after about ten years.
  - Once established, plants will produce every spring for many years!

[Find more tips here.](#)



**Make It**

Be sure to follow local food safety rules and regulations. Learn more here: [Food Safety Rules and Regulations](#) | [Washington State Department of Health](#).

| Recipe: Roasted Asparagus<br>Yield: 20 sample size servings   |   |
|---|---|
| Ingredients   | Directions  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 2 pounds fresh asparagus spears</li><li>• 1 tablespoon vegetable oil</li><li>• 1 dash each of salt and black pepper</li></ul> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees F.</li><li>2. Rinse asparagus spears and trim off tough ends. Leave whole or cut into shorter lengths. (Tip: ask kids to help. They can snap off the asparagus ends by hand, or use scissors to trim them.)</li><li>3. In a large bowl, toss spears with the oil, salt, and pepper.</li><li>4. Place spears in a single layer on a large baking sheet.</li><li>5. Roast for 12 to 15 minutes or until the asparagus pieces are lightly browned. Thick spears will take a longer baking time.</li></ol> |

Notes:

Try adding more seasonings such as lemon zest or garlic powder.

Recipe adapted from Oregon Food Hero: [Roasted Asparagus](#) | [Food Hero](#) | [Recipe](#).

Explore interactive taste test resources to encourage participants to try what you made!

[Taste-Testing Event Resources](#)



## Watch Our Garden Grown

### Learn It

Preschool

#### Objectives

- Children learn that we can grow asparagus in a garden.
- Children review how asparagus grows.
- Children make their own asparagus to display in classroom "garden."

#### Materials

- Colored paper, cut into strips (for asparagus spears) and circles or triangles (for asparagus tips)
- Yarn, paint, or other art supplies for decorating
- Scissors
- Glue

#### Directions

1. Provide children with asparagus spears, circles/triangles for the tips, and glue.
2. Make asparagus spears from green, purple, and/or white paper. Cut out small circles or triangles of brown or purple paper using a hole punch or scissors.
3. Create a sample asparagus spear by taking a green/purple/white shape and pasting small circles or triangles at the tip.
4. Tell children: we can grow asparagus in a garden. Ask children if anyone has ever grown asparagus in a garden.
5. Ask children to remember how asparagus grows (the roots grow underground; the spears grow above the ground).
6. Show children example asparagus and tell children: today we will be making asparagus for our "class garden."
7. Invite children to make their own asparagus for the "class garden."
8. Designate a space on a wall in the classroom for the "class garden."



## Eat It

- Asparagus is an excellent source of Vitamin B9 (folate), a vitamin that helps make new cells. Folate is important for people of all ages but is especially important for developing babies during pregnancy.



Asparagus at the Farmers Market, credit: WSDA

## Read It

- Gus the Asparagus, by Ann-Marie Finn and Kaylene Hobson
- The Mighty Asparagus, by Vladimir Radunsky

## More About It

- Asparagus activities preschool: [Harvest for Healthy Kids Asparagus Activity Plan](#)
- Lesson for preschool and early elementary: [Asparagus - Food Detectives | CHILE Plus Nutrition & Physical Activity Curriculum](#)
- Lesson for 3rd-5th grade: [Vegetables: Tops and Bottoms – Curriculum Matrix | Washington Agriculture in the Classroom](#)
- Lesson for child and adult learners: [extension.sdstate.edu/sites/default/files/2024-06/S-0001-04-Asparagus-Schools\\_Adults.pdf](https://extension.sdstate.edu/sites/default/files/2024-06/S-0001-04-Asparagus-Schools_Adults.pdf)