

ASPARAGUS – A WA GROWN CROP

Washington's spring weather brings warm days and cool nights . . . perfect conditions for growing asparagus. Stems can grow from seven to nine inches in one day!

Asparagus begins as a tiny black seed. After one year, the seed has developed long, tubular roots and is called a "crown". The crowns are transplanted to fields where they are placed in deep trenches and covered with ten to twelve inches of soil. It then takes two years before the plant is ready to be harvested for the first time.

After two years, the asparagus is harvested each spring. Each crown will produce for 15 to 20 years.

Asparagus is an excellent source of protein, vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium, and iron. It is also packed with the naturally occurring phytochemicals of glutathione, rutin, and folic acid. Next to orange juice, asparagus is regarded as the second best whole food source of folic acid.

Asparagus is a member of the lily family. Cultivation of asparagus began over 2000 years ago in the eastern Mediterranean Region. Romans and Greeks alike ate asparagus for the rich flavor and medicinal qualities.

The lily vegetable spread to all parts of the Mediterranean; from Egypt to Spain. France and England developed the taste for asparagus as a delicacy traced back to 16th century gastronomic literature.

Asparagus came to America with the early colonists. Cultivation then spread west to Michigan, California, and Washington State.

Full, plump Washington asparagus is the result of an ideal growing situation:

- Mineral-rich volcanic soil
- Mountain-fed irrigation streams
- Warm days for vigorous growth
- Cool nights for snapping in that unique Washington flavor and color that make it the world's premium vegetable!

Asparagus is low in calories and is naturally fat and cholesterol free!

There are approximately 175 asparagus farms in Washington State, growing nearly 10,000 acres of asparagus in the Columbia Basin, the Yakima Valley, and the Walla Walla areas.

Approximately 53 million pounds of asparagus is produced each year, bringing in \$28 million to Washington's economy.