

the deeper the better—no one is likely to trench too deep. It is useless to trench unless something is put between every layer to keep the soil open. Stable or farmyard manure is the best possible material to use, and the quantity should be liberal; it cannot be overdone; though it is possible to give more than is actually necessary, the overplus would not be in any way prejudicial to the plants. For keeping heavy soil open any or all of the following materials are useful: Burnt clay, road-sand, sea or river sand, remains of rubbish-fires, vegetable mould of any kind, old mortar rubbish from buildings, turf from the top of pastures. Sea-sand with broken shells in it should be avoided, or at least it should not be used in the top spit, as the sharp shell cuts the young grass.

The most suitable soil for asparagus is fairly strong loam overlying gravel. The same class of loam on clay is perhaps as good, but would require effectual drainage. Lighter soil would be equally good if in a place naturally moist. The class of soil first described is best for most places.

It may be as well to say here that plantations of asparagus are often made for commercial purposes on quite different lines to those outlined above. The land in such cases is prepared by the plough only; the beds are of an ephemeral character, and do not come within the scope of this article, which refers to smaller operations and private gardens.

It was formerly the practice to plant asparagus on raised beds. The practice has been so generally abandoned that it does not seem to me advisable to describe that method of planting. The plants are now put out on the flat, a method that is better than raised beds, inasmuch as it gives the roots a wider and freer run. Before proceeding to plant the ultimate aim should be determined. There are three things to choose between—namely, good heads of ordinary type, giant heads, and giant heads blanched. Blanched heads are secured by a covering of soil. These are most appreciated on the Continent of Europe, and are required by canning-factories. Heads are made green by allowing them to make their growth in the air clear of the soil; the lower portion of such heads are blanched. Green heads are said to have more flavour than white, and are preferred by most British people.

Good heads are grown by planting in rows 30 in. apart, the plants being 15 in. asunder in the rows. Giant heads are secured by planting at greater distances apart—rows 4 ft. apart, plants at least 3 ft. asunder. The distances last mentioned may appear extravagant, but this is not really so in the end. After a few years the plants will practically fill the space, the roots become