



Root systems of K.B.F. asparagus plants 1 year old (left) and 21 months from seed (right). A foot rule is shown with the former and a 3ft. rule with the latter.

Before planting it is advisable to cultivate the furrow in which the plants are to be placed about 2in. deeper than the normal planting depth. The crowns then have cultivated soil under them to facilitate easier root establishment.

Planting should be done as soon as possible after the furrows are opened and while the soil is still moist and easily worked. Soil that has been left to dry out will not settle firmly around the roots and this will probably result in some plants failing to become established. The roots of the young crowns should be spread umbrella-wise in the furrow and covered with about 3in. of soil. This soil should then be pressed down firmly. As the fern grows the remainder of the furrow may be filled in by subsequent cultivations, thus helping to keep down weeds by smothering them as they germinate. By about the middle of the growing season the crowns should be covered to their normal depth and the beds should be level.

In the home garden much the same practice as for commercial planting can be carried out, but owing to the smallness of private sections, closer planting may be adopted; for instance, distance between rows could be 4ft.

and distance apart of plants in the rows 18in. Where space is limited intercropping may be carried out before the asparagus comes into production, but careful choice of crops, such as quick-maturing vegetables, is recommended. Inter-cultivation should be done carefully to avoid damage to the roots of the asparagus.

#### Cultivation

During the growing season shallow cuts between rows may be made with a rotary hoe or grubber to suppress weed growth. The matured fern growth may be cut and cultivated in, as it provides a good supply of organic material. If any seedling plants appear, they should not be permitted to become established, but should be treated as weeds.

In late autumn several shallow discings may be carried out to incorporate in the soil any farmyard manure that may be used as well as the fern growth and to obtain a satisfactory tilth.

A single shallow discing—sufficient to loosen the soil surface and to provide for the easy emergence of the new season's spears—is carried out in early spring.

#### Fertilisers

There are no hard-and-fast rules governing fertiliser applications to asparagus beds, but they should be applied to ensure good growth throughout the years. In general asparagus prefers a slightly acid soil, but will grow quite well under neutral or slightly alkaline conditions. If the soil tends to be too alkaline, the alkalinity may be reduced by applications of sulphate of ammonia, which will also supply nitrogen. Nitrogen supplies should be kept at a fairly high level with phosphates and potash to maintain a satisfactory balance. On most soils light applications of lime are beneficial.

Though it will tolerate salt (its habitat is coastal areas), there is no evidence that salt is beneficial to asparagus.

#### Harvesting

The first cutting of K.B.F. strain can be made 2 years after the crowns are planted. Being very vigorous, it will produce a good supply of excellent spears by that time. As excessive cutting in the early life of the bed tends to weaken the crowns, a light cutting only is recommended for the first harvest.

The duration of harvesting varies with the season, but usually it is of 8 to 10 weeks. Cutting ceases about the end of November and the fern growth is then allowed to develop to build up good crowns for the following season.

The K.B.F. variety may not be favoured by canners, as its vigorous growth produces much larger spears than are generally used for canning. For the market and home gardens it is excellent, and in the opinion of many it surpasses all other varieties in size, yield, and vigour.

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Area of K.B.F. asparagus 19 months from seed.