Growing & Harvesting

Grow. Plant one- or two-year-old crowns (stem and roots) in full sun six weeks before the last spring frost. Plant crowns 18-24 inches apart in trenches eight inches deep. Spread roots in bottom of trench and cover with 1-2 inches of soil. Gradually cover with more soil as growth progresses. Provide 1-2 inches of water every week, especially during first year, but do not overwater. Consider mulching in mid-summer to help control weeds. For more growing information look for the Extension MontGuide Asparagus in the Home Garden at www.msuextension.org or contact your Extension office.

Harvest. Harvest in summer, only after the third year. Snap 6- to 10-inch long, pencil-thin spears close to the ground. Do not over harvest.

Selection
Choose odorless, pencil-thin to 1/2-inch thick asparagus spears with dry, tight tips. Avoid limp, wilted, or extra-large, woody spears.

Storage
Refrigerate asparagus up to four days by wrapping bottom ends of stalks in wet paper towel and placing in a plastic bag.

Nutrition Information
Most vegetables are rich in fiber and phytochemicals, but provide negligible amounts of saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol, and sodium and are gluten-free. Asparagus is high in folate and potassium and is a good source of Vitamins K and A, with only 20 calories per half-cup serving.

Uses
Grill/Broil. Place asparagus in a plastic bag, drizzle with olive oil and low-sodium seasoning. Shake until asparagus is coated, then put spears on a preheated (medium-high heat) grill or under a hot broiler. Cook about 5-8 minutes until tender, turning occasionally.

Microwave. Place asparagus in a microwave-safe container with a small amount of water, low-sodium seasoning, and garlic. Cook for 3-4 minutes or until desired tenderness is reached.

Raw. Rinse and dry asparagus and enjoy as is, or in your favorite dip or salad.

Sauté or Stir-fry. Drizzle cooking oil in a heated pan. Add low-sodium seasoning with bite-size or one-inch pieces. Cook asparagus by stirring over high heat until desired tenderness, about 5-8 minutes.

Roast. Place asparagus in a plastic bag, drizzle with olive oil and seasoning. Shake until asparagus is coated, transfer spears onto a baking sheet or pan, then roast in oven at 400° F, about 5-8 minutes.

Season. To enhance flavor, season with allspice, basil, dill weed, ginger, marjoram, nutmeg, thyme or lemon juice.

Steam. Place asparagus in a pan with a small amount of water, low-sodium seasoning, and garlic. Cook on medium heat for 8-10 minutes or until desired tenderness.

Preserve. For more information on preserving asparagus, look for Extension MontGuides on: Freezing Vegetables; Home Canning Pressures and Processing Times. Visit www.msuextension.org/nutrition and click on the food preservation link or contact your Extension office.
Wash hands. Thoroughly rinse asparagus to remove any dirt or sand.

Chop off white, woody ends. These ends have a tough texture.

If roasting or grilling, leave spears whole.

If sautéing or using in stir-fry, chop asparagus into bite-size pieces of about one inch.

For More Information:
Montana State University Extension: www.msuextension.org
MSU Extension Master Gardener: www.mtmastergardener.org
MSU Extension Food and Nutrition: www.msuextension.org/nutrition
MSU Extension Nutrition Education Programs: www.buyeatlivebetter.org

Information Courtesy of:

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