

Asparagus

History

Asparagus has been grown by people since 3000 B.C. It was first grown in the Mediterranean region throughout North Africa, Europe, and the Middle East. Egyptians used asparagus spears as gifts for the gods. Pictures of asparagus have been found in tombs.

Greeks and Romans enjoyed the sweet flavor of asparagus and considered it a delicacy. The Greeks harvested wild asparagus, but the Romans developed gardening techniques to maximize production of the vegetable. In the 1600s, King Louis VIX of France had gardeners grow asparagus in greenhouses to allow him to have the vegetable throughout the year.

Asparagus did not naturally grow in the United States. During the 1600s, colonists from France and England brought asparagus to New England. In the 1850s asparagus was planted in northern California. Since this time, California has been the leading grower of asparagus.

Veggie Science

Asparagus gets its green color from chlorophyll in the cells. Chlorophyll is needed to allow plants to make energy from the sun. However, chlorophyll is activated by the sun. Plants that are not exposed to sunlight do not develop the traditional green color because the chlorophyll is not activated. White asparagus is grown under the soil so it is never exposed to sunlight and never turns green.



Fun Facts

- Asparagus can be found in three colors: green, white, and purple.
- Asparagus is related to onions, leeks, and garlic.
- 90 percent of asparagus is eaten fresh.
- The “Martha Washington” is one of the most popular varieties of asparagus.
- California grows 80 percent of all the asparagus in the US.
- It takes two years to start a farm field of asparagus.
- Asparagus roots can grow 20 feet deep.



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