

Asparagus Production

Asparagus, a member of the lily family, is a perennial plant. In mid-to-late April when soil temperatures reach approximately 12 degrees centigrade, spear growth will start. As the temperatures increase, growth accelerates until spears reach a harvestable size of 8-10 inches (20+ centimetres). Spear growth is a function of temperature—the warmer the temperature, the faster the growth.

Harvest continues through to the end of May or early June. The spears are then allowed to grow into fern that may reach as high as 6-8 feet (2+ meters). Plants need about 12 weeks after harvest to produce the nutrients that will be trans-located to the roots in the fall. After dormancy occurs in early fall, the fern turns brown and may be mowed then or in the spring prior to harvest.

During later winter, a soil test is taken to determine fertilizer requirements for the next growing season. The basic elements, plus any trace elements, are ordered in time for application by mid-March.

Before the spears emerge in the spring, some form of weed control is practiced (either herbicide or flame weeding). A supplemental fertilizer is applied at the end of harvest as well as sprays for weeds and asparagus beetles.

An underground irrigation system is in place (trickle tapes) for use during extended dry periods in the summer (approximately 30-40 litres per minute from a dedicated irrigation well).

The Asparagus Farm

Machinery with Operator & Supervisory Work: Estimated Times for 2006 Spring Harvest

Tasks with Machinery	Estimated Hours	
Mowing	4	
Fertilizing in spring	4	
Spraying for weeds (?)	4	
Burning for weeds and beetle control	4	
Fertilizing after harvest	3	
Spraying end of harvest for weeds	4	
	23 hours	

Other Tasks	Estimated Hours	
Irrigation-service system & monitor during summer	3	
Service machinery/equipment	5	
Supervision of harvest	Approx 3:00 per open day	

Prepared by Charles R Ford