



## Vegetables

### **Grow Your Own Asparagus Spears:**

1. Choose a sunny sheltered site and add plenty of organic matter to produce a fertile, well-drained soil. Make sure to clear the site of perennial weeds.
2. Dig a 20cm trench and add some more organic matter. Then refill to give a 10cm high ridge down the centre. Place your crowns at least 45cm apart along the ridge, draping the roots wither side of the ridge.
3. Refill the trench, covering the tip of the crowns.
4. Harvest the shoots when they reach around 10-12cm (4-4 ½ in) tall. Cut them about 3cm (1 ¼ in) below the soil surface. Make sure to check the bed every couple of days.

### Extra Tip!!

- In your first season, try to make it short, perhaps cutting for only six weeks, and stopping if the plants seem weak. This will help in the long run.

### **How To Grow Garlic:**

1. If your soil is heavy create a ridge 20cm wide and about 15cm tall. Firm with the sole of your foot before planting.
2. Break up the garlic bulbs into individual cloves, taking care not to damage them.
3. Plant the cloves 10-15cm apart into individual holes, deep enough that they are covered with 5cm of soil. The flat end of the clove should point downwards. Allow 45cm between your rows and water sparingly.
4. You can harvest and eat your garlic as soon as the bulb is swollen. Lift the bulbs and dry somewhere warm and dry.

### **Tips For Growing Garlic:**

- If you have no open ground, you can plant garlic in pots. Plant three cloves per 15cm pot. Keep the soil just moist, and place the pot in a sunny position.
- Cover your newly planted rows as birds are known to pull up cloves. Once they're well rooted, you can remove the covering.
- Remove flower stalks if they start to develop, so that the resources are used to develop the bulb instead of the flower.
- For something a little different! Why not grow your garlic indoors on a windowsill to provide garlic leaves. Harvest the leaves as required until the bulb has been exhausted. Be aware that growing garlic indoors is not a successful method for cultivating good quality garlic bulbs.

### **What Is The Difference Between 'Hardneck' & 'Softneck'?**

Hardneck: This type of garlic that produces a flower stem, which can be removed. These varieties are ideal if you want to grow garlic scapes but still want a crop of garlic bulbs. Hardneck varieties don't store as well as softneck varieties. Some examples of these is 'Lautrec Wight' and 'Elephant Garlic'.

Softneck: This type of garlic does not produce a flower stem and will store longer than hardneck varieties. An example of a softneck variety is 'Germidour'.

### **Grow Your Own Onions From Sets:**

1. Plant onion sets in a modular tray and fill each cell with compost.
2. Push one onion set into each module, sinking them up to the neck, but don't bury them entirely.
3. Water to settle compost around each set and check regularly to keep the compost moist.
4. If grown indoors, after a couple of weeks, you'll notice green shoots emerging from the bulbs.
5. Prepare an area outside in a sunny, warm position. Tread it firm and rake to level the surface.
6. Thoroughly water the tray before planting, ensuring each bulb has a strong root system.
7. Plant bulbs at least 10-15cm apart and deep enough to bury them.
8. Firm the soil around the roots of each plant tightly and water to settle down.
9. Harvest your onions in August/September.
10. Lay your freshly harvested bulbs in trays, or in a sunny place outdoors. Clean off any soil and peel back any damaged skins to prepare for storage.

### **Tips For Growing Onions From Sets:**

- Weed regularly between bulbs to avoid competition for moisture, light and space.
- Cut flower spikes off emerging bulbs as soon as you notice them.
- Do not forcibly bend the foliage over as this can damage the neck of the bulb.
- Dry the skin of the bulbs completely before storing. Look out for any signs of disease or rot.
- Regular hoeing between rows and developing bulbs can encourage a higher yield.

### **Tips On How To Grow Rhubarb:**

- Choose a sunny, open site. As rhubarb is a stately plant, allow at least 100-120cm between each plant and rows.
- Wait a full year before your first harvest. Do not pick stems of newly planted rhubarb.
- Harvest rhubarb by pulling the stems instead of cutting them. Grip the stem close to ground level and remove it using a pulling and twisting action.
- Remove all traces of foliage before cooking the stems. Rhubarb leaves are highly poisonous and maybe fatal if eaten.
- If you are short on space, why not grow rhubarb in containers. Rhubarb plants have large root systems, so make sure to choose a large container (40L or more).

### **Different Types Of Strawberries:**

- Alpine: Produces lots of very small and sweet berries. They grow from July to September. An example is 'Albion'
- Summer-Fruiting: Produces a heavy flush of larger strawberries. They grow in early and mid-summer. An example is 'Cambridge Favourite'.
- Perpetual-Fruiting: Produces fruit in small flushes from early summer to early autumn.

### **Planting Strawberries Under Cover:**

- Plant young plants (runners) as soon as you get them. Make sure the crowns are level with the soil surface, as being too high will result in them drying out, and too low could leave them prone to rot.
- Strawberries are shallow-rooting plants and can dry out quickly, but also hate sitting in wet soil, so watering little and often is the best technique.

- Remove runners as they develop as this will keep the plants' energies focused on flower and fruit production.
- Check the plants regularly as over-ripe fruit will rot quickly. So for the sweetest, most fragrant fruit, pick the warmest time of the day.
- After cropping, remove old, damaged leaves, fruit and runners. Give them a balanced feed and healthy new leaves should start to grow a few weeks later, ready for the next year.

### **Strawberry Aftercare:**

- As the summer progresses, keep on top of weeding, remove any runners and clear away dead foliage.
- Each spring spread a general purpose fertiliser around your plants along with compost.
- Strawberry plants tend to lose vigour after about two to three years and harvests become smaller. So it's best to replace after their third year of cropping.

### **Growing Strawberries Indoors:**

- Growing your strawberries in a greenhouse or conservatory can produce fruit up to a month earlier than usual.
- Choose a pot that is at least 15cm (6") in diameter and add general multipurpose compost.
- Strawberry plants need to be left outside for autumn and winter, as they require a "chill period" to initiate flowering.
- Then from February onwards you can bring your plants indoors, in to a bright position and water when required. Take care to not allow temperatures to rise about 15°C.
- During this time you will also need to pollinate the flowers by hand. Lightly brush a soft paint brush around the yellow part of each of the flowers.
- Remember to feed your plants with a balanced fertilisers every two to three weeks until flowering begins. At this point you should switch to a high-potash liquid fertiliser.

### **Grow Your Own Shallots From Sets:**

1. Place sets the correct distance apart and plant, firming the soil around them until the tips are just showing.
2. Prevent birds from pulling up sets by snipping off any long pieces of brown growth from the top of each set.
3. Water sparingly if conditions are dry and within a few weeks each set will have grown a clump of green shoots.
4. Leaves will start turning yellow during July time, showing the crop is reaching maturity.
5. Once the leaves turn brown the crop is ready. Ease them up with a trowel and leave them to dry on the surface.
6. When dry, separate into individual bulbs and peel off dead tops, skins and roots and store in a dry place.

### **Growing Asparagus In Containers:**

Asparagus is best grown in the ground, but if you are struggling for space, containers are a good alternative. Also if you want to grow a small quantity, containers are a great option. When grown in permanent beds, asparagus crowns will crop up to 25 years. Whereas container planting has a limited lifespan and will only crop for approximately for 5 years.