



PROJECT LIST:

Asparagus, Rhubarb & Horseradish

These three vegetables are somewhat different in the way they're planted and harvested, but can be well worth the effort. All can be grown successfully here in north Texas if you follow these tips.

- ☐ **Compost**—Add more compost to your garden seasonally before each planting.
- ☐ **Garden Soil Builder**— Soil Mender's blend of aged humus, manure, and alfalfa meal is excellent to amend soils intended for vegetables.
- ☐ **Organic Fertilizer**— Best for edibles; try **Espoma's Tomato-Tone** or **Garden-Tone**.
- ☐ **Liquid Seaweed**—An organic extract that strengthens plants for better resistance to temperature fluctuations, stress, and disease.
- ☐ **Mulch**—Protect soil with at least 2-3 inches of a shredded bark mulch.

This is a basic list to get you started. Speak with a Garden Advisor for specific recommendations.

Asparagus

Enjoying this crop is an investment of time and space, but well worth the reward. This delicious vegetable is very low in calories and a good source of nutrients. As it grows, it makes an attractive plant and can produce for up to 15 years.

SELECTION: There are two types: females tend to produce smaller, yet more spears, but can tend to spend energy on fruiting. Male varieties are more disease resistant and better producers of larger spears.

SITE: Asparagus does best in a location that will remain undisturbed for several years, as it takes 2-3 years to produce well. *Allow plenty of space:* plants can be close to 4' x 4', and asparagus likes to be in a bed by itself. Choose a site in full sun and thoroughly amend the soil with plenty of organic matter.

PREP: Dig a trench at least 10" deep and 10" wide—you'll want to allow 18"-24" between each crown you're planting, so plan the length accordingly. Space trenches 4' apart.

- Add 2" of well-rotted manure blended with compost to the bottom of each trench.
- Add an organic vegetable food at the rate of 1-2 teaspoons per linear foot; blend into the compost base.
- Backfill the trench with 1" of amended garden soil and rake lightly to blend with compost/fertilizer blend in bottom of trench.
- Make a slight mound of the amended soil down the center of the trench, and you're ready to plant!

FERTILIZE: Feeding asparagus is similar to your organic lawn schedule: early spring, late summer, and fall.

(Continued on reverse)

PLANT: Place the crowns in late winter over the mound in the trench 18"-24" apart with the roots spread outward (if you're planting two rows, stagger the crowns so that they aren't directly across from each other).

- Immediately cover the crowns with 3" of compost to prevent drying out; then water them in well.
- In several weeks, the first young spears will appear. As they grow, you should gradually add soil around the shoots, eventually filling up the trench until it is level with surrounding soil.
- Mulch around the growing plants with 2" of organic matter to reduce water loss and discourage weeds.

HARVEST: Leave all spears to grow the first year. These should be allowed to mature into the ferny foliage, which will support the growth and development of the roots for next year. Carefully cut spears 4-6" long just below the soil line. Harvest only sparingly the second year in order to encourage a great crop for the third year. Each year, allow some foliage to stay so that the plants gain energy for each successive growing year.

Rhubarb

While rhubarb requires extra care due to our hot summers, it's well worth the effort: the edible stalks add a delicious, fruity flavor that's truly unique.

SITE: Rhubarb does best in a location where it can remain undisturbed for at least a year—it will produce better the older it gets. It does best in well-amended garden soil or a large container where it will be protected from the hot afternoon sun.

- **PLANT:** In soil amended with plenty of organic matter, plant the roots 3' apart—if planting rows, space rows 3'-4' apart. Plant the root with the top, or 'crown bud,' 2" below the soil surface. Water thoroughly! Don't let the soil get too dry, which is why good soil prep is always important.
- **HARVEST:** Only stalks are harvested, since the leaves have toxic levels of oxalic acid. Normally, you would not harvest any stalks the first year; instead allowing the root system to establish. However, since our hot summers can shorten the lifespan of rhubarb, you may choose to carefully harvest a few stalks, allowing a few to remain so that the plant can continue to photosynthesize and grow.

Horseradish

Horseradish is an easy crop to grow. The hot, zesty punch of flavor fresh from the garden is unbeatable! Purchased roots for horseradish usually have buds on one end, so you can tell which way is up.

- **SITE:** Horseradish is not a fussy crop, but does best in full—to part-sun locations in soil amended with plenty of organic matter. Containers will work, but note that it may try to grow through drain holes.
- **PLANT:** Bury the root standing 'upright' with the bud ends at the top, just above the soil level. Space roots 18"-20" apart; they'll grow up to 3' in height.
- **HARVEST:** Horseradish will perennialize in our area, but you must leave a piece of the root in the soil when you harvest each season for the plant to re-grow. Horseradish root can be used in sauces, slaw, potato salads, and many other recipes for that eye-opening, sinus-clearing zing.

See a Garden Advisor for additional help to be the most successful with these crops.

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