

» The Vegetable Garden. «

ASPARAGUS CULTURE.



THE Massachusetts Ploughman gives these hints on the culture of this popular vegetable : The best soil is a deep, fine sandy loam ; any soil that is well-drained and free from stones will answer if not too poor and sandy ; but asparagus will thrive on very poor land if well manured. Stony land will not answer at all, as the stones make the sprouts grow crooked and worthless. The soil is best prepared by cultivating in corn or potatoes for a year or two previously, and taking especial care to clean out the couch grass, sorrel and other perennial weeds, which are a great nuisance in the asparagus bed. Plow the land early in spring, working in a good coat of manure if you have it, or if you have none to spare, you can grow first rate asparagus on commercial fertilizers, indeed many prefer them as they bring in no weeds, but don't be afraid to manure liberally. A ton per acre of good standard fertilizers is none too much to begin with, and a mixture of ground bone and wood ashes, or fine ground Carolina rock and wood ashes is as good as anything.

Set out the plants early in May, the earlier the better, even in April if you can get ready ; use good one-year-old plants of the Moore's Giant variety, set out the roots in rows, four feet apart, and fifteen inches between the plants, and set them in the bottom of a deep furrow made by running a large plow three or four times in the same place, some even shovelling out the bottom of the furrow so as to get the roots well down, but this is hardly necessary. Cover the roots an inch deep at first, and gradually during the season level off the earth in hoeing them so that they will be quite level. A crop of carrots or other roots may be grown the first year between the rows of asparagus, as they do not shade the land much the first year.

In the autumn of every year cut out by hand, and carefully burn every plant that bears any berries ; otherwise their seed will over-run your bed with a crowd of small plants worse than weeds.

The second year the bed should be cultivated and hoed, but not cut till the third year, when a light crop may be taken, and afterwards a full crop for many years.

The cultivation consists in going over the field early in spring with a spading fork, striking the butts of the old stalks so as to break them off under ground, they are then raked into heaps and burned. The ground is then dressed with about 500 lbs., per acre, each, of ground bone and wood ashes, and the surface worked fine by repeated use of the disc harrow or cultivator. This is to be done as early in April as the soil can be worked, and before the asparagus starts into growth. After the sprouts are up the cultivator can be run only between the rows till cutting is over, which will be about June 15 to 20,