

ASPARAGUS CULTURE FOR CITY AND VILLAGE LOTS.



SPARAGUS, considered as a vegetable, has some peculiarities which distinguish it from other plants of the kitchen garden.

The growing plant is very beautiful. Its feathery masses of graceful foliage, its peculiar shade of green in summer, the bright red berries contrasted with the rich yellow of the maturing plant in the autumn, make it well worthy of a place among ornamental plants, particularly in the shrubbery border. In cultivation the plant is injured rather than benefited by frequent stirring of the soil; all it asks is abundant

room, not less than five feet square to each plant, and liberal feeding. It takes time to establish itself, but when this is well done a little care and free manuring each year will keep it permanently and enormously productive, a single plant under the Argenteuil system of cultivation having furnished thirty-seven pounds of the choicest asparagus in a season.

The beauty, the ease of culture, the permanency and productiveness of the plants, and the fact that asparagus, even more than most vegetables, should be used when perfectly fresh—should be cut and cooked the same hour—warrant the cultivation of this plant in places where the attempt to grow other vegetables might not be wise. A few plants can be introduced with good effect in highly kept pleasure-grounds. A few can be set in the corner of the fence or beside the shed in places too contracted to warrant the attempt to have a garden of any kind. In fact, there are very few town and village places that could not easily furnish the family with an abundant supply of this vegetable at a trifling expenditure of labor, and without detracting from the beauty or usefulness of the grounds.

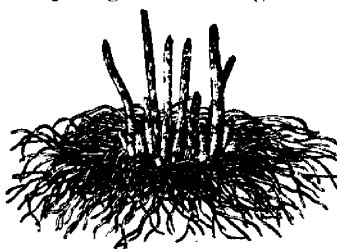


FIG. 964.

As a guide to those who may wish to undertake asparagus culture in the way suggested, I give the cultural methods followed in the Argenteuil district of France, which has the reputation of producing the finest asparagus in the world. A considerable proportion of that grown there is the product, not of asparagus farms, or even of fields and beds, but of single plants or clumps standing by themselves, or in groups of from five to twenty scattered here and there in any open space that may chance to be left in corners or between trees and buildings. Wherever there is an unused bit of ground five feet in diameter, which is not in dense shade or liable to be covered with water, there the Argenteuil gardener sticks in a plant, gives it good care, and is well repaid for his labor.

The method of cultivation is simple. The spot is put in good tilth and