

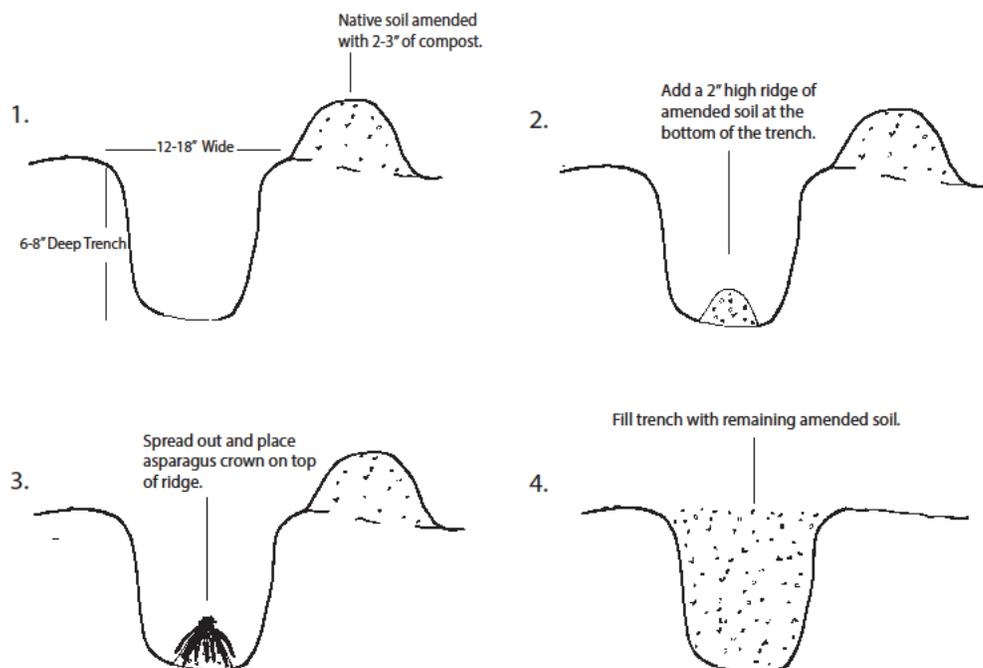
## ASPARAGUS CARE

The key to growing asparagus is soil drainage. Asparagus needs deep, well-drained soil without hardpan or clay subsoil layers. They die out rapidly when they are dormant where roots are too damp. When grown west of the cascades, asparagus tends to benefit from being planted in raised beds, due to our heavier soils.

**SOIL PREPARATION (Optional)** Crowns can get a strong start from early soil prep. Start in fall by digging out a 24" wide trench about 18" deep. If you're making a big planting, the row centers should be 5 feet apart. Neatly pile the soil besides the trench. Then blend in a couple inches of compost and refill the trench.

**PLANTING** Plant in early-mid spring. Dig a 6-8-inch-deep trench, about one shovel wide down the previously prepared row. Mix 2-3 inches of compost to soil, if it was not prepped in the fall. Create a 2-inch-high ridge with soil mix down the center of the trench. The roots naturally grow in a fan-shape with the crown at the center. Spread them back out in that pattern in the bottom of the trench on top of the ridge. Space the crowns about five inches apart. Never let crown root tips touch each other when planting. Cover with amended soil.

### Planting Asparagus Crowns



**MAINTENANCE** Each fall, cover the bed with a heavy sprinkling of compost. Each spring, immediately after you have finished harvesting, sprinkle some fertilizer down the row to grow the ferns during the summer. The food the ferns store in the roots is what makes next year's harvest. Keep the bed well-watered and weeded. It is wise to remove female ferns before the seed-balls drop or the bed will self-seed and get too thick with small crowns.

**HARVEST** Stop cutting when the size of the shoots tapers off. Harvest lasts only for a couple of weeks the first year; an established bed can be cut for a month before it begins to weaken. Make sure to let the crowns rebuild their food reserves all summer.