**Topic Page: Asparagus**

**Definition:** **ASPARAGUS** from *A Dictionary of Entomology*

Noun. (Middle English sperage < Latin, asparagus < Greek, asparagos = to spring up.) 1. Any of various perennial plants of Old World Genus *Asparagus* (lily Family), especially *Asparagus officinalis*. Members display multiply branched, leaf-like stems, minute scale-like leaves and small flowers; pale green succulent stems cooked and eaten as a vegetable. 2. Edible young shoots of asparagus plant.

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**Summary Article:** **asparagus**

from *The Columbia Encyclopedia*

perennial garden vegetable (*Asparagus officinalis*) of the family Liliaceae (lily family), native to the E Mediterranean area and now naturalized over much of the world. As in the other species of this Old World genus of succulent plants, the stems are green and function as leaves, while the leaves themselves are reduced to small scales. The tender shoots of asparagus are cut and eaten in the spring. It grows wild in the salt marshes of Europe and Asia, where it has also been under cultivation from antiquity. In early times it was regarded as a panacea. Cato in his *On Farming* gave directions for growing asparagus similar to those in a modern manual of agriculture. The San Joaquin valley is the main asparagus-growing area of the United States; over half the crop is processed, i.e., canned or frozen. The feathery sprays of the mature garden asparagus are sometimes used by florists, but more popular for decorative purposes are other plants of the same genus—the asparagus fern (*A. plumosus*, not a true fern) and the florists’ smilax (*A. asparagoidea*), both climbing vines native to S Africa. The wild smilax, usually called greenbrier, belongs to the genus *Smilax*. Asparagus is classified in the division Magnoliophyta, class Liliopsida, order Liliales, family Liliaceae.

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