

Ornamental Asparagus

GENERAL

Origin	: Mediterranean, sub-tropical
Vigour	: normal growth rate
Humidity	: semi-humid, very humid
Propagation	: division
Maintenance	: moderate

CONDITIONS

Urban climate	: resistant
Dessication	: vulnerable
Stagnant water	: vulnerable
Irrigation	: medium
Salinity/ppm	: high (3500 ppm)
Hardiness	: -3°C

SHAPE

Type	: sub-shrub
Height	: 0.5 m-3 m
Spread	: 0.6 m-2 m
Foliage	: evergreen

FLOWER

Colour	: white, secondary: green
Period	: August - October
Smell	: scented, weak, flower

FRUIT

Type of fruit	: berry
Toxicity	: inedible

A mound of bright-green, ferny leaves make this Asparagus a very attractive perennial. Its rapidly growing, prickly stems trail down walls or may cover the ground, including more slow-growing neighbours. Insignificant, fragrant, white flowers are followed by red berries, which contrast well with the shiny, needle-like foliage. They are, however, considered poisonous. Botanical note: the leaves are what are known as 'cladodes' (modified branches), while the true foliage has degenerated to tiny inconspicuous scales. This South African native looks best in semi-shaded, rather protected locations. For a neat appearance, good drainage and soil with added organic matter are essential. It is drought-tolerant, but only for a short time. Fleshy roots allow a quick recovery, when leggy stems are cut back entirely to renew the plant or when the plant has been damaged by frost. Dividing the rootstock is the easiest propagation method or by seed. A. d. 'Sprengerii' has landscape value as a groundcover or foreground planting. The trailing stems are often used in floral arrangements, and this asparagus is frequently seen as a long-lasting indoor or pot plant on a patio. Chlorosis may be a problem in alkaline soils, but can be prevented by an application of ammonium sulphate or iron chelate. The low-maintenance measures include fertilising and periodic pruning.

