



Unit 10 Herbaceous Crops

✦ Glossary

Snap off: to break a piece from a whole

Deplete: to reduce something in size or amount

Creek: a narrow waterway

Hardy: robust

Enhance: to improve the quality of something



Stem crops: asparagus and rhubarb

Asparagus and rhubarb are two types of plants whose edible parts are the stems.

Asparagus

Unlike most other vegetables, asparagus is a perennial plant, meaning it comes back year after year. In other words, you only have to plant it once. If you care for it properly, it may last 15 years or more.

You usually have to wait a couple of years before the plant bears any edible shoots. In the first and second seasons, the plant concentrates on building up a stable root system. Around the third season, you finally see spears that you can harvest.

Wait until the spears are about 3/5 of an inch (1.5 cm) or more in diameter before you harvest them. Make a cut just below the ground to enable the cut to properly heal, or **snap off** the spears at soil level. You can expect to get eight to ten sprouts per plant the first harvest year and more as the plant continues to mature.

Never take everything when you harvest asparagus: instead, plant extras and pick what you want without **depleting** the whole crop. Leaving some of the shoots makes for a healthier crop.

Asparagus does especially well in a moist environment. Plant them on banks of a canal, **creek**, or river if you have running water through your property and benefit from healthy plants that also help keep bank erosion down.



Rhubarb

Another **hardy** perennial plant is rhubarb. It is drought resistant and can do well in most soils, but it loves well-drained soils **enhanced** with organic matter.

To get the best stalk growth, remove flowers as they appear. Don't harvest the stalks until their third year. In the first two years, the stalks and leaves are nourishing the roots. Beginning in the third year and ever after, the stalks may be picked all at once or individually over the following four to six weeks. After the stalks are cut, you should remove the leaves as they are toxic.

(Adapted from: T. Husarik, *Hobby Farming*, Wiley, 2008)





Understanding the text

1. Read the text and translate the following terms and expressions. Use the dictionary if necessary.

- 1. Shoot:
- 2. Root system:
- 3. Spear:
- 4. Sprout:
- 5. Leaves:
- 6. Stalk:

2. Find eight verbs contained in the text related to growing asparagus and rhubarb. One has been done as an example.

- 1. **Plant**
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

3. Fill in these fact files about the two vegetables mentioned in the text.

Name		
Type of plant		
Main characteristics		
Planting and growing tips		