

# Asparagus Fern



Not actually a fern at all, Asparagus Ferns are directly related to the common vegetable, hence the name. They are also more distantly related to onions, garlic, and lilies, all within the family Liliaceae. Despite their relationships, all parts of the ornamental Asparagus Ferns are poisonous. Adaptable, and extremely easy to grow, these plants are long lived, and can thrive with little care. Beware their soft appearance; stems of all varieties are lined with small but sharp thorns.

## LIGHT

As the relationships might suggest, Asparagus Ferns thrive in high light conditions, but are adaptable to lower light, tolerating all but the lowest of light indoors, or deep shade outdoors. Note that the rate of growth is directly proportional to the amount of light they receive. The more light they are exposed to, the faster they will grow. They will be quite slow in low light.

## WATERING

Also, unlike most true ferns, these plants prefer somewhat drier soil. Mature plants seem to even thrive on neglect (to a point). Ideally, soil should be kept lightly moist, and allowed to dry (not quite completely) between watering. Overly wet or dry plants will begin to exhibit yellowing or brown leaves which should be removed, as they will not revive. If this happens, adjust your watering habits accordingly.

## FEEDING

Like any well behaved, low maintenance plant, Asparagus Ferns do not rely heavily on being fed. Bulbous roots do a good job of storing nutrients, and releasing them as needed. However, they will benefit from a monthly feeding with an all-purpose fertilizer. If foliage becomes pale, this may be an indication that feeding may be needed, or that the plant needs to be divided or repotted.

## REPOTTING & DIVIDING

While Asparagus Ferns do not mind being pot-bound, likely, there will come a point where they need to be repotted or divided. Dividing, with a little patience is relatively easy. Once removed from the pot, using a clean, sharp knife, groups of 'bulblets' can be separated, with the attached foliage intact. Divided plants should be potted using a good quality potting mix (such as Sunshine LC1) in containers which allow for plenty of root growth. The crown of the plant should be at soil level. Water thoroughly.



## VARIETIES



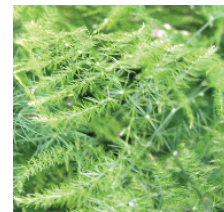
### Sprenger's (Asparagus densiflorus 'Sprengerii')

Perhaps the most common of this group, it has long been favored as a foliage compliment in outdoor containers. As the hardiest of the Asparagus Ferns, it can survive temperatures well below freezing, & can last well into the winter outside, sometimes adorning itself with showy, bright red (but poisonous) berries. Developing a graceful, cascading habit, it is suitable for pots or baskets, indoors or out.



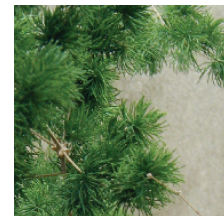
### Foxtail Fern (Asparagus densiflorus 'Meyersii')

This dramatic form produces spire-like fronds which radiate reliably from a central core. Slower growing than most Asparagus Ferns, Foxtail is a plant that only gets showier & more dramatic over time. Native to South Africa, this variety will rarely exceed 1-2' in height, but can splay out up to 3' wide in a period of years.



### Plumosa Fern (Asparagus setaceus)

Despite its dainty & delicate appearance, Plumosa is one tough camper, who's growth can become aggressive once pot-bound. This climbing variety sends out self-twining shoots which will wrap around anything in their reach. Fortunately, unwanted growth can be easily pruned back or removed. This plant develops an unusually open, airy, and layered appearance with time.



### Ming Fern (Asparagus retrofractus, Asparagus macowanii)

Sometimes, harder to find, this variety is identified by its clusters of soft green tufts randomly spaced along its barbed branches. A semi-cascading habit, and bright green new growth make for an informal bushy plant with unique appeal. Suitable as a house-plant, bonsai, or container accent, it is prized by florists for it's desirable texture. Cut stems in water can last for weeks.