

Fresh asparagus season is here

NEWARK, DEL.— Fresh asparagus is always a Spring favorite. Delaware's fresh market asparagus growers should be continuing fresh cuttings into June, according to Delaware Extension marketing specialist Carl German.

German suggested you watch the classified section of the newspaper to locate fresh cut asparagus. Then be sure to call the grower to assure yourself of a supply before visiting the farm.

Normally, asparagus is available for cutting in Delaware from about the fourth week of April to the third week of June. This is known as the cutting season.

Asparagus is a nutritious food. It's low in calories and high in Vitamin A, Vitamin C and iron, adds Extension home economist Sue Schaefer.

Home-grown asparagus should be cut as soon as the tips of the stalks reach eight inches above the ground.

Tips should be tightly closed. When selecting stalks at a store or roadside market, look for closed, compact tips and straight, fresh-appearing stalks with only an inch or so of tough, woody base to trim off the bottom. Don't cut sprouts in their first year of growth.

Maintain the quality and flavor of fresh asparagus with prompt refrigeration. Pre-packaging spears in perforated film bags helps

reduce water loss and maintains freshness.

To prepare fresh asparagus, simply bend the stalk until it snaps just above the woody (white) portion. Wash thoroughly. Cook the top portion in boiling water until tender.

Asparagus tastes great seasoned lightly with salt and pepper or with tarragon or sesame seed, says Schaefer. For a more elegant topping, try herb butter or hollandaise sauce.

Asparagus combines well with other foods—fresh in salads or cooked with creamed eggs, crab or ham.

Asparagus can be canned

or frozen for long-term storage. For freezing be sure to heat the stalks in boiling water to stop the enzyme action and preserve freshness. Cool promptly, pack, label and freeze. For canning it's necessary to use a pressure canner.

For further information contact your county home economist.

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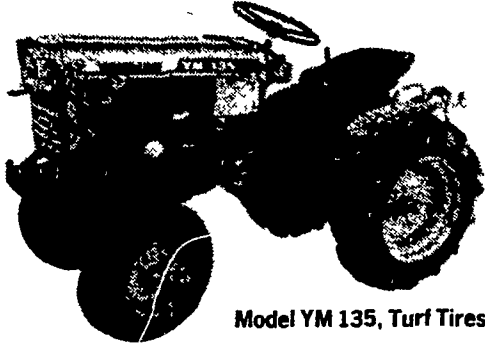
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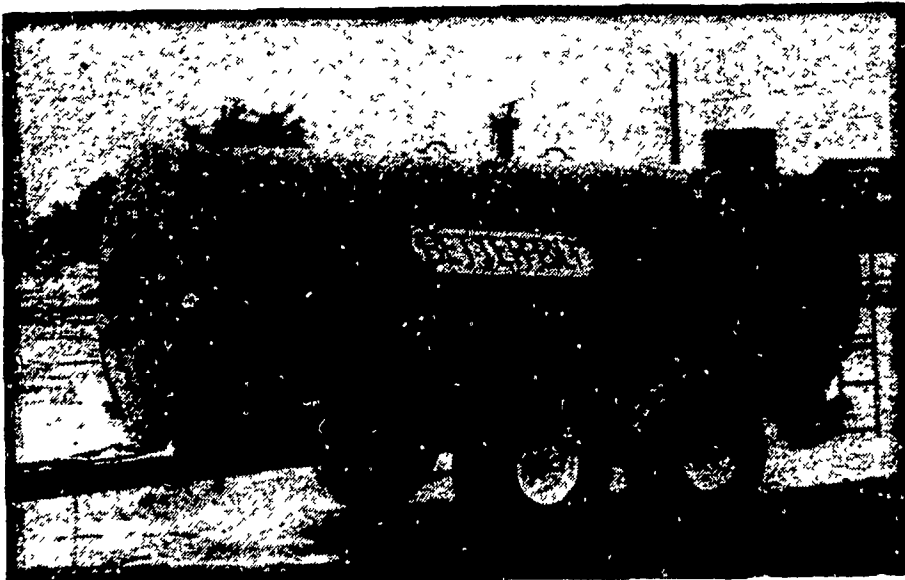
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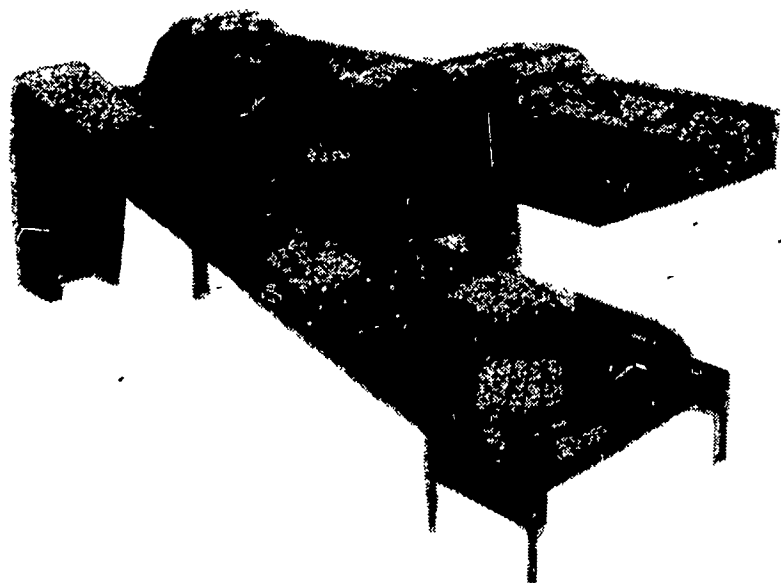


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