

Jersey Giant Hybrid Proves Bigger Is Better

Rutgers University



Researchers at Rutgers University made a major breakthrough for asparagus production when they developed Jersey Giant — the first all-male asparagus hybrid. Asparagus is dioecious, which means a plant is either male or female. Because male plants do not produce fruits that drain nutrient resources they out-yield female plants over time. Male plants also do not produce unwanted volunteer seedlings that contaminate the field. They also do not bear the weight of the fruits, therefore are less likely to suffer stalk breakage in a windstorm.

“ *Jersey Giant is highly productive. Its introduction led to doubling of yields for the growers and helped to make this vegetable affordable to consumers.* ”

Jersey Giant has vigorous growth habit and very good resistance against asparagus rust, a damaging disease that reduces yield and weakens the plant. It also has enhanced tolerance to crown and root rot diseases caused by *Fusarium* fungi that can shorten the lifespan of asparagus. Hence, Jersey Giant has been known to produce for up to 20 years from Washington State eastward to New England and south to the Carolinas. Since its introduction, Jersey Giant has become the most cultivated of the all-male hybrids.

Rutgers University has one of the most active asparagus breeding programs in the world, and continues to develop many other unique varieties of asparagus since succeeding with Jersey Giant.

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