‘Jersey Centennial’ Asparagus

J. Howard Ellison
Department of Horticulture and Forestry, Rutgers — The State University, New Brunswick, NJ 08903

Grant Vest
Department of Horticulture, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824

Robert W. Langlois
Agricultural Agent, Gloucester County, Clayton, NJ 08312

Additional index words. Asparagus officinalis, vegetable breeding

‘Jersey Centennial’ asparagus (Asparagus officinalis L.), tested under the designation Rutgers-Michigan Hybrid 202, is a new cultivar that is more vigorous, rust resistant, and productive than the ‘Mary Washington’ strain when grown on the fusarium-infested soils of New Jersey. It was also the most productive asparagus cultivar in a Michigan yield trial on noninfested soil.

Origin

The seed parent of ‘Jersey Centennial’ was selected for its vigor from a 35-year-old field of ‘Mary Washington’ asparagus on the Charles Riggins farm in Green­wich, New Jersey. When selected in 1962, about half of the crowns in the field were dead, but this crown had 30 large stalks which were round in cross section. The pollen parent was selected in 1960 for its rust resistance and vigor from a 15-year-old field of ‘Mary Washington’ asparagus on the A.F. Newton Farm near Shap­town, New Jersey. The selected crown had 58 stalks; the largest 3 stalks measured 19, 17 and 16 mm in diameter 2.5 cm above the ground.

Description

An 8-year yield trial in New Jersey showed that ‘Jersey Centennial’ averaged 0.96) with the early 2-week yield, and was projected on that basis (Table 1). During the 8 years tested, ‘Jersey Centennial’ was projected to yield 38% more total weight than ‘Mary Washington’ (Table 1). The greatest yield differences occurred in the later years of the trial, indicating a good long-term yield outlook. A part of the difference between cultivars during the later years may have due to the greater fusarium tolerance of ‘Jersey Centennial’ as compared to ‘Mary Washington.’ ‘Jersey Centennial’ displayed superior stand and vigor as compared to ‘Mary Washington’ for 8 years on fusarium-infested land in 2 sites in South Jersey in addition to the exper­imental site where yield was measured.

In 6 years of the 8 years of a trial at the Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station at Sodus, ‘Jersey Centennial’ had higher marketable yields than 8 other asparagus cultivars (Table 2). ‘Jersey Centennial’ was not the highest yielding variety during the first 2 years, but after 3 years it surpassed the other cultivars and showed steady increases thereafter. The yield for 1973-76, and especially for 1976, shows ‘Jersey Centennial’ to be the distinct leader, indicating a continuing high yield potential and good longevity, similar to that of the seed parent.

Morphological and color data indicate differences between ‘Jersey Centennial’ and ‘Mary Washington’ (Table 3).

Availability

Several companies will establish seed production plantings of the parent clones in 1981, and seed of ‘Jersey Centennial’ will be available in the fall of 1982. Interested parties should contact Research Corporation, 405 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10017, for sources of seed.