



## Aim for the ideal water balance.

Asparagus belongs to the group of water stress tolerant plants. Despite this, it is still very important to aim for the ideal moisture conditions so that stress is prevented and the productivity of the plant is maximised. Optimal moisture management ensures better photosynthesis, less fern dieback and a good intake of the available nutrients.

A good water supply in the first years after planting is very important, as at this time the foundation is being laid for production in subsequent years. The second year after planting in particular seems crucial, as at this stage the asparagus plant has completely matured foliage and the root system is still in the process of developing. The asparagus plant needs a strong and voluminous root system in order to store enough sugars to form the basis for good production in the following years.

As a rule of thumb, on a sunny day and depending on the wind, an adult asparagus plant can transpire 8-10 ml.



To correctly respond to the moisture requirement of an asparagus plant, various factors must be considered. As already mentioned the root/foliage ratio, but also important is the growth phase of the plants and obviously the water already present in the soil.

It is easy to assess the soil moisture status by simply digging holes with a spade at various places in the field.

If irrigation is necessary, try to keep the frequency low, in other words irrigate in copious quantities. If an irrigation strategy of little but often is followed, the risk of mould infections will be greatly increased.

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### Limseeds invests in sales

### Germany, a veritable asparagus nation

### Hypopta caestrum, the asparagus moth

**Limseeds®**  
the asparagus breeding company

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## Limseeds invests in sales

For a number of years Limseeds has proven to be successful in the sale of asparagus seeds. With the growing number of varieties, asparagus seed sales in countries outside the European Union are also on the increase. In the near future, Limseeds expects to be able to introduce more varieties that are suitable for warm and tropical climate zones, so sales will take on a more global character. To be able to cope with the quickly rising demand for Limseeds' asparagus seeds properly, Ton Smolders has been appointed as account manager from June 1st.

Ton is 32 years old and has already gained plenty of experience with asparagus at his former employer. Together with Sales Manager Piet Beurskens, Ton Smolders will be responsible for providing cultivation advice regarding the choice of variety and the sales of asparagus seeds.



# Germany, a veritable asparagus nation

With a growing area covering approximately 22,000 hectares, the most important vegetable grown in Germany is asparagus. With annual production totalling about 94,000 tons Germany is 80% self sufficient in asparagus. This makes Germany the largest asparagus producer in Europe, and number three in the world rankings. As far as consumption per head of the population of white asparagus goes, at a good 1100 grams Germany is the undisputed world champion (this applies to fresh white asparagus, as the Spanish consume 1400 grams per head, fresh green and white conserved. Source Aceera.) This

means that asparagus in Germany occupies eighth place in the tables of the most frequently bought vegetables. The figures (originating from ZMP) indicate a stable line again for the coming years. However, with a sales reach of 46% there is still a huge potential. German consumers attach great importance to the origin of asparagus and the regional character of the produce. This is reflected in the sales figures. Of all the vegetables sold in Germany, 50% is purchased in the supermarket. For asparagus, however, this figure is at a level of 20 %. So the conclusion is that asparagus is chiefly bought straight from

the grower or in specialty greengrocers. The German asparagus growing sector is feeling increasing pressure in filling the labour requirement. There is a shortage of highly motivated workers, due to the huge labour demand throughout Europe. Many countries have less bureaucratic legislation, which prompts the mainly East European labour to seek work in countries other than Germany.

## Hypopta caestrum, the asparagus moth

*Hypopta caestrum* is a moth with a specific preference for asparagus. This highly damaging insect is mainly seen in asparagus growing regions around the Mediterranean. This insect has not (yet) been signalled in more northern growing regions, such as Germany, the Netherlands or England.

A typical first sign of infection is that the initial damage is nearly always found in plants around the perimeter of the plot. The infection often spreads to affect the rest of the plot over the course of time. *Hypopta caestrum* mainly occurs in sandy soils and is observed to a clearly lesser extent on heavier loamy or clay soils. The adult *hypopta caestrum* can be seen from the end of May until July; during this period females deposit their eggs on the stem collar, just below the soil surface. An adult female can deposit as many as 40 eggs. Adult moths have 4 wings and can reach a wingspan of 4 cm. The wings vary from pale grey to brown in colour. The yellowy larvae hatch after 3 to 4 weeks, then move into the soil in groups in search of food, which they first find in the subsurface parts of the stems and root buds. Having eaten these parts they then turn their attention to the fleshy asparagus



root. At first sight, the damage caused by the larvae appears to resemble drought damage as the flow of sap to the plant above ground is disrupted. However, this is rapidly followed by complete dieback, the stems above the ground collapse and healthy buds are destroyed. In August and September the larvae, which can reach a length of up to 5 cm and a circumference of 1.5 – 2 cm, penetrate the soil to a depth of up to 50 cm to hibernate. From early to mid April the larvae crawl up again where they pupate just below the surface. This stage can last 3-5 weeks and the first asparagus moths become active again from about mid May. Typical of this pupation period is the vertical pupal cocoons that spread a distinctive strong smell. There is no effective control method available

to combat the asparagus moth, a certain degree of prevention can be obtained by removing the foliage in the autumn and burning it. This approach will destroy any larvae still on the subsurface parts of the stem, but has no effect on the many larvae that have already burrowed deep into the soil.

## Company information

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Information about varieties developed by us (Avalim, Backlim, Gijnlim, Grolim, Herkolim, Horlim and Thielim) can be obtained from our variety specialists. They can be reached using the telephone and fax number or email address stated above.

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