



April 2013

# Asparagus

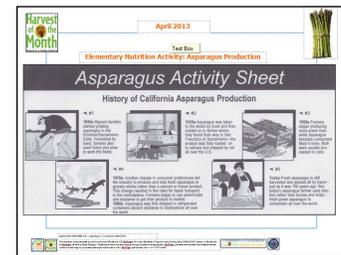


## Elementary Nutrition Activity: Asparagus Production

**OBJECTIVE:** Increased familiarity with asparagus. Identify local food system.

**PREPARATION:** Gather the following items: green construction paper, scissors, shoe box (or any substitute for shoe box) and rubber bands. Make copies of the *History of California Asparagus Production* sheet provided.

1. Review the *History of California Asparagus Production* sheet with students.
2. Review the importance of understanding that cooperation and competition are valuable yet challenging components of the business world. This is especially true in asparagus production. More than 75% of asparagus production costs are associated with labor including planting, harvesting, packaging and shipping. Additionally, in recent years, the value of California asparagus production has declined due to international competition in places where labor costs are lower.
3. Explain to students that the purpose of the activity is to reinforce the concepts of cooperation and competition by having teams cut and package asparagus. If needed, review the concepts/definition of cooperation and competition.
4. Divide students into teams of 5 or 6.
5. Designate one area as "the field." Place 10 sheets of green construction paper and two pairs of scissors for each group. Designate another area, at least 25 feet away as "the end of the field row" by placing 20 rubber bands and the shoe box.
6. Explain the green construction paper represents asparagus growing in the field. Students are to cut 1-inch strips of paper, pass it to the end of the row, bundle it into bunches of 10 papers with rubber band and place into packing crate (shoe box).
7. Prior to starting, model the activity for students. Allow students to perform the activity more than once and explain students can make the necessary changes within the production line to become more efficient manufactures.
8. Following the lesson, discuss how cooperation and competition were involved in the activity. Was competition a useful tool? How about cooperation? Lastly, how did competition and cooperation affect quality?



Lesson from CFAITC© 2011 Asparagus! It's All About Teamwork!

This material was produced by the University of California UC CalFresh Nutrition Education Program with funding from USDA SNAP, known in California as CalFresh (formerly Food Stamps). These institutions are equal opportunity providers and employers. CalFresh provides assistance to low-income households and can help buy nutritious foods for better health. For CalFresh information, call 1-877-847-3663.





## History of California Asparagus Production



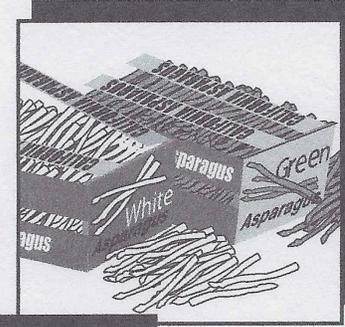
◀ #1

**1850s**-Migrant families started growing asparagus in the Stockton/Sacramento Delta. Harvested by hand, farmers also used horse and plow to work the fields.



◀ #2

**1930s**-Asparagus was taken to the docks by truck and then loaded on to ferries where they found their way to San Francisco or Sacramento—the product was then loaded on to railcars and shipped by rail all over the U.S.



◀ #3

**1950s**-Farmers began producing more green than white asparagus because consumers liked it more. Both were usually processed in cans.



◀ #4

**1970s**- Another change in consumer preferences led the industry to produce and ship fresh asparagus to grocery stores rather than a canned or frozen product. This change resulted in the need for faster transport to the marketplace. Farmers began to use semi-trucks and airplanes to get their product to market.  
**1980s**- Asparagus was first shipped in refrigerated containers aboard airplanes to destinations all over the world.



◀ #5

**Today**-Fresh asparagus is still harvested and packed all by hand—just as it was 150 years ago. But, today's asparagus farmer uses tractors rather than horses and ships fresh green asparagus to consumers all over the world.

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