

Asparagus densiflorus 'Myers' Myers Asparagus Fern¹

Edward F. Gilman, Ryan W. Klein, and Gail Hansen²

Introduction

'Myers' asparagus fern is a spreading perennial herb that has a fine texture with a stiff, upright habit. The habit is quite unlike that of the more common 'Sprengeri' fern. This plant grows fairly rapidly and may attain a height of about 2 feet. The true leaves of this fern are scale-like and inconspicuous. The structures that most consider to be the leaves of this plant are actually narrow, light green, leaf-like branchlets called cladophylls. The stems of the asparagus fern emerge directly from the ground and are stiffly erect and have very short branches. These stems are a bit woody and are often armed with sharp spines. The flowers are white or pale pink and occur in axillary racemes that are ¼ inch long; they are not showy. The bright red berries of this herb, however, are quite showy.



Figure 2. Leaf—*Asparagus densiflorus* 'Myers': 'Myers' asparagus fern.

Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS

General Information

Scientific name: *Asparagus densiflorus* 'Myers'

Pronunciation: ass-SPAR-uh-gus den-sif-FLOR-us

Common name(s): 'Myers' asparagus fern

Family: *Liliaceae*

Plant type: herbaceous; perennial

USDA hardiness zones: 9B through 11 (Figure 3)

Planting month for zone 9: year-round

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year-round



Figure 1. Full form—*Asparagus densiflorus* 'Myers': 'Myers' asparagus fern.

Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS

1. This document is FPS-52, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date October 1999. Revised August 2018 and March 2023. Visit the EDIS website at <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu> for the currently supported version of this publication.

2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department; Ryan W. Klein, graduate assistant, Environmental Horticulture Department; and Gail Hansen, associate professor, Environmental Horticulture Department; UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville, FL 32611.

Origin: not native to North America

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

Uses: mass planting; container or above-ground planter; groundcover; border; cascading down a wall; suitable for growing indoors; accent

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range



Figure 3. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Description

Height: 1 to 2 feet

Spread: 2 to 4 feet

Plant habit: upright

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: fast

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: linear

Leaf venation: none, or difficult to see

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white

Flower characteristic: flowers periodically throughout the year

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval

Fruit length: less than 1/2 inch

Fruit cover: fleshy

Fruit color: red

Fruit characteristic: attracts birds

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: typically multi-trunked or clumping stems

Current year stem/twig color: not applicable

Current year stem/twig thickness: not applicable

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun; plant grows in the shade

Soil tolerances: occasionally wet; slightly alkaline; clay; sand; acidic; loam

Drought tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerances: good

Plant spacing: 18 to 24 inches

Other

Roots: not applicable

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding

Pest resistance: no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

Use and Management

The asparagus fern may be used as a specimen, border, ground cover, bedding plant, or container plant. It will not cascade over a wall like the 'Sprengeri' cultivar because the habit is upright, but could be used as a small, low-growing, unclipped hedge or border. It will make a nice accent plant in a small residential landscape or rock garden. In a sunny location indoors, it maintains a fairly nice plant for several years.

Grow this plant in full sun or partial shade, and plant it in well-drained soil. Keep it irrigated regularly, especially in a container.

Asparagus fern may be propagated by seeds and by division of the tubers.

Design Considerations

The asparagus fern is often called the foxtail fern because the small, needle-shaped, leaf-like branches give it a fluffy appearance similar to a fox's tail. This upright, vase-shaped fern is perfect for containers and small-scale, special spaces in the landscape. Companion plants should have larger, smooth leaves to contrast with the tiny needle-like branches of the fern. Simple forms and dark green or smooth foliage of companion plants will highlight the delicate foliage. The light to medium green of the fern will work well with different flower colors, but deep or bright colors will show better than light pastels. Simple small- or medium-size flowers will contrast more with the tiny foliage and white, yellow, and blue flowers will complement the bright red berries.

Pests and Diseases

Other than mites, none of major concern.