

# *Asparagus densiflorus* 'Myers' Myers Asparagus Fern<sup>1</sup>

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

Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS



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

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## General Information

**Scientific name:** *Asparagus densiflorus* 'Myers'

**Pronunciation:** as-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

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Invasive potential:** The Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council has declared asparagus fern a Category I invasive exotic.

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

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**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 ½ 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.