Asparagus Plumosa as an Ornamental

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Asparagus plumosa, commonly though wrongly called Asparagus fern, is one of the commercial products of Florida. As nearly all of it is shipped to Northern florists, I doubt if we at home realize its ornamental qualities. In the North it is used almost entirely for decorative work and as a background for flowers. There it is either greenhouse grown or comes as cut sprays from Florida. Here it grows out in the open all the year and we can carry the decorative idea of its use into the ornamental, for instead of dealing with cut flowers we can enlarge its use to porch, lawn and yard, both as a background for flowers and foliage and for its own beauty as a mass of green. Grown as a pot plant, it does not go to seed but its fine feathery close-grown sprays have a beauty all their own.

Another, and I think a better way of using it is as a screen for porch or window. Here given a trellis of wood, wire or even string, it will climb steadily upward, spreading out as it grows until it forms a dense mass of fine green foliage. In this form it will blossom and the seeds form, which with their coloring from green through purple to black give an added beauty to the screen.

It is a plant that is comparatively easy to grow, started from seed, then transplanted to a good bed in ground or pot, given water and fertilizer (especially the latter, as it is a heavy feeder), it will do the rest.

Once firmly rooted in the ground, it is there to stay. I know of plants in a commercial fernery that are twenty-three years old, and this fernery is still considered one of the best in the State.

Under the slight protection of the ordinary eaves of the porch or roof, it is immune to frost or heat, though I have seen it successfully grown on a trellis in the open yard. For decorative work or bouquets the sprays can be cut from either the pot plant or trellis to the great advantage of both the plant and yourself, a case of “eating your cake and having it too.”

Almost the only enemy is the red spider, well known to citrus growers, and this is easily controlled by spraying with the ordinary lime sulphur solution. Although indigenous to Florida, it has become a true Florida product, and therefore my advice is, try it and live happy ever afterward.