

Four New Asparagus Varieties

now in third season of trial in experimental and commercial plantings, new varieties show promise but more testing needed

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Although not officially released— and won't be for several years—four new asparagus varieties now occupy between eight and ten thousand acres for further testing.

The new varieties—309, 500W, 711, and 873—were not intended to be resistant to Fusarium wilt but to increase yields and perhaps to extend the life of the asparagus bed beyond the usual 15 years.

Strain 309 is derived from a cross of two high yielding strains and is not directly related to the other three strains. Strain 500W is a cross between two high yielding strains of 500—the standard commercial variety since 1943—and strains 711 and 873 are derived from high yielding female plants that were back crossed to D-37. Thus D-37 appears in the pedigree of 500W once and twice in 711 and 873.

The four varieties look promising but final conclusions must wait for the results of seven or eight years of tests—about half the normal life of an asparagus bed.

The indications so far are that two of

the new varieties—711 and 873—may have a longer than normal bed life, but this might not hold true as the test proceeds.

Variety 500 as Standard

Comparisons of the new varieties are being made with variety 500 as fast as seed becomes available.

All four varieties appear to yield slightly better than 500, principally because the spears are larger. Three varieties—309, 711, and 873—are slightly later than the original 500 variety, have

heads not quite so compact, and are adapted to central and southern California. Variety 500W is slightly earlier than 500, with the same compact head, and adapted to central California.

Other new varieties are being tested and studies are under way on their performance in replanted soil. Results from plants tested in the nursery this year will determine whether field tests will be started next year.

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The above progress report is based on Research Project No. 709-A.

Characteristics of New Asparagus Strains

Strain	Earliness	Yield	Spear diameter	Head compactness	Spear color	Adaptation	Strain Uniformity
500	Early	Good	Good	Tight	Light green	Central California	Uniform
500W	Slightly Earlier	Slightly Higher	Slightly Larger	Tight	"	"	Better
309	Slightly Later	Higher	Larger	Fairly Tight	"	Central South Cal.	Less
711	"	"	"	"	Dark green*	"	"
873	"	"	"	"	Dark green	"	Uniform

* With purple overcast.

Vigorous development of spears, left, and fern growth, right, of plant D-37.

