Asparagus densiflorus ‘Sprengeri’

Edward F. Gilman

Introduction

‘Sprengeri’ Asparagus Fern is a rounded herbaceous perennial that is used in the landscape for its attractive, fine-textured foliage. This 1- to 4-foot-tall plant has true leaves that are scale-like, and inconspicuous. The structures that most refer to as leaves are actually leaf-like branchlets called cladophylls. These tiny cladophylls are linear, flattened structures that are bright green in color. They occur singly or in groups of 3 or more at a node. The stems of this plant emerge directly from the ground and become woody and spiny, so be careful when handling this species. The thorns cause significant irritation to many people that handle the plant. Pretty, red, ovoid berries occur on Asparagus densiflorus throughout the year. Several birds eat and probably distribute the fruit. These fruits follow tiny, white, flowers that occur in axillary racemes; the flowers are inconspicuous for the most part but fragrant. Seeds germinate in the landscape and the plant has escaped into natural habitats in parts of Florida. It can also become a weed in your landscape.

General Information

Scientific name: Asparagus densiflorus ‘Sprengeri’

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

Common name(s): ‘Sprengeri’ Asparagus Fern

Family: Liliaceae

Plant type: herbaceous; perennial

USDA hardiness zones: 9B through 11 (Fig. 1)

Planting month for zone 7: year round

Planting month for zone 8: year round

Planting month for zone 9: year round

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: not native to North America

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

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

Description

Height: 1 to 2 feet

Spread: 3 to 4 feet

Plant habit: spreading; round

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

1. This document is Fact Sheet FPS-51, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: October 1999. Please visit the EDIS web site at http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu.

2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, 32611.

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function without regard to race, color, sex, age, handicap, or national origin. For information on obtaining other extension publications, contact your county Cooperative Extension Service office. Florida Cooperative Extension Service / Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences / University of Florida / Christine Taylor Waddill, Dean
Flower characteristic: flowers periodically throughout the year

Drought tolerance: moderate
Soil salt tolerances: good
Plant spacing: 18 to 24 inches

Flower

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval
Fruit length: less than .5 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

Other

Roots: not applicable
Winter interest: no special winter interest
Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding
Invasive potential: potentially invasive
Pest resistance: no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

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

Use and Management

This charming perennial can be used in the landscape as a border plant or ground cover. It can be maintained by clipping to any height up to 2 feet tall. It suits a container well and is beautiful if trained to cascade over a wall. When the root system fills the container, remove the root ball from the pot, split it apart and replant a portion of it back into the container. The rest of the root ball can be planted in other containers. One may also use Asparagus Fern in mixed shrub groupings.

October 1999
Asparagus densiflorus 'Sprenger' -- 'Sprenger' Asparagus Fern

This plant is adaptable to various well-drained soils and will flourish in full sun or partial shade. The foliage of Asparagus Fern is killed by frost, but the plant will recover quickly in the southern portion of hardiness zone 8. It is very drought tolerant and will survive in hot, dry locations, although it will grow slower in dry locations.

The berries of Asparagus densiflorus contain 1 or 2, black, hard seeds that can be used for propagation; the seeds germinate in 4 to 6 weeks. This plant may also be propagated by cuttings and division.

Other cultivars include ‘Myers’ with stiffly erect stems, dense foliage forming narrow plumes about 2 feet tall.

**Pests and Diseases**

Except for mites, none of major concern.