



Growing Broccoli

Native to the eastern Mediterranean, broccoli has migrated throughout the world to become a major vegetable of choice for home gardeners.

Culture: Not only is broccoli high in both vitamins A and C as well as folic acid and iron, but recent research has indicated that many cruciforms, in particular broccoli, contain high levels of sulforaphane. This compound appears to induce enzymes that may actually detoxify carcinogens within the human body.

Remember mother always did know best when she said, "Eat your broccoli, it's good for you"!

Broccoli thrives in a warm sunny site with soil that is deep, organic and well drained - avoid windy sites. Since broccoli matures fairly quickly and makes its best growth in cooler weather, both early and late crops are possible. For early crops, start seeds indoors in a soil-less mix from late March to early April. Set out the transplants in late April and early May spacing them about 45cm (18") apart in rows 90cm (3') apart.

Use a balanced vegetable fertilizer and keep the soil well weeded and evenly watered. Broccoli can become top heavy as the heads form so be prepared to stake taller varieties. Harvest the main head when the buds are tight and compact and well before flowering occurs. To do so, cut the centre stalk at an angle below the main head and avoid damaging the side shoots. This will encourage further heads to set and help prolong the harvest. Flowering will signal an end to head production. One packet sows approx 20m (66') of row when thinned to a 40-50 cm (16-18") spacing.

