



Growing Broccoli

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All Parts of Broccoli are Tasty

Broccoli is an easy vegetable to grow, and you can eat all parts of the plant. Besides the head, young leaves can be eaten cooked and they resemble collard greens. The hearts of the stems are delicious raw with the hard outer fibers removed.

Growing Broccoli

Broccoli prefers full sun, but will tolerate light shade. As Broccoli is a heavy feeder soil should be rich loose with lots of organic material in the form of compost and composted manures mixed in. Broccoli can be directly planted by seed, or you may find broccoli plants in the garden center for an earlier crop. The seeds are planted .5 to 1 cm ($\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ ") deep in early spring, as soon as the soil can be worked without compacting or around the first of May. Successive plantings every 2 weeks will give you a longer harvest. The seedlings can tolerate a light frost. After the transplants have been hardened off they should be planted up to the bottom of the first big leaf.

Spacing should be 45-60cm (18-24") Spacing is important if you want to get big heads, and avoid disease problems.

When to Harvest

Broccoli can be harvested when the buds of the head are tight and compact. Your window of opportunity for harvesting is about 3-4 days before the flowers open. Cut down on the stalk 15 to 20cm, (6-8") using a sharp knife, leaving the large leaves below the head. Smaller heads will continue to grow as side shoots. You may want to add a little more fertilizer at this time to encourage the growth of the side shoots. Four to six cuttings are possible from each main broccoli stalk for up to six weeks after harvesting the main head.

Problems You Might Encounter

Cabbage worms and loopers are probably the most common problem you will have. They are the larvae of white and yellow butterflies. Using row covers will prevent the butterflies from gaining access to your plants. If they are infested, then hand picking of the larva will probably suffice.

Storage

To make sure you don't have any unwanted visitors in your broccoli after harvesting, plunge the harvested broccoli into warm water with a little white vinegar added and any stowaways will float to the top. It is also helpful to cut the heads apart and inspect for any trapped guests. Do not soak for more than 15 minutes. Broccoli can be stored in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks. Freezing is the best way to store broccoli for the longer term after blanching. Learn about freezing broccoli at: www.pickyourown.org

Learn more about growing broccoli from the Cornell University site www.gardening.cornell.edu >

Learn more about broccoli on Wikipedia >