

Growing Broccoli



Selecting and Preparing a Site

Select a site that receives 6 to 8 hours of sunlight per day. Soil should be moist, fertile, and well-draining. Broccoli grows equally well in sandy soils and clay-filled soils. Before planting, in early spring, work in 2 to 4 inches of rich compost or a thin layer of manure. Change the growing site from year to year to prevent plants from contracting soilborne diseases.



Planting

Start seeds indoors about 60 days before planting transplants outside. Broccoli seeds take 3 to 10 days to germinate and about a month to grow to a size ready to be transplanted. Harden off transplants before planting them outside in the spring by holding them at 55°F for a week with minimal but adequate watering.

Plant transplants outside during the first two weeks of April for a summer crop and sow seeds for fall harvests in mid-June through July 10th. Broccoli germinates best when soil temperatures are 50°F to 85°F and grows best when air temperatures are in the 60's.

If sowing seeds outdoors sow seeds a half inch deep and 3 inches apart. When seedlings reach a height of 2 to 3 inches, thin them so that plants are 12 to 20 inches apart. Plant transplants outdoors 12 to 20 inches apart in holes slightly deeper than the depth of their container. Space rows of broccoli 3 feet apart. Water well after planting.



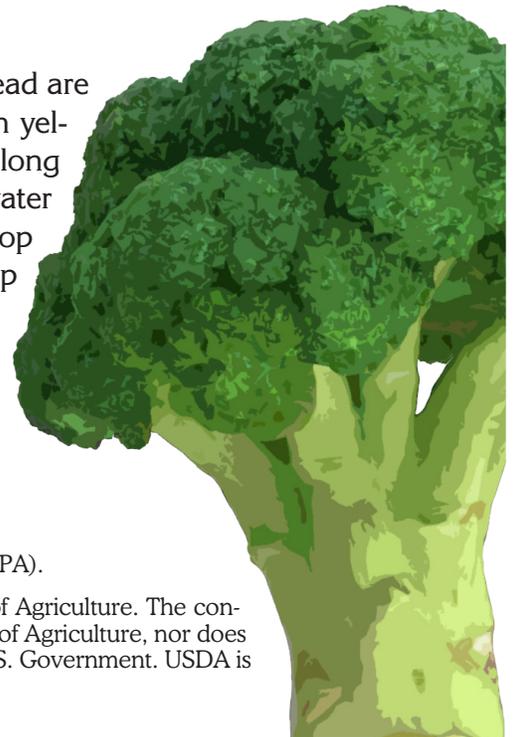
Caring for the Site

Water regularly, especially in drought conditions, but do not get broccoli heads wet as it can encourage rot. Fertilize broccoli 3 weeks after planting. Apply mulch after the danger of frost has passed. The mulch will manage weeds and provide a more uniform soil temperature and moisture around the roots. If an early planting is subjected to a cold snap (temperatures of 35°F to 50°F) for 10 or more continuous days, the plants may bolt (flower) making them unproductive. Row covers can be used to try to protect plants from the cold temperatures.



Harvesting

Harvest broccoli in the morning when the buds of the head are first and tight. When the head starts to loosen and turn yellow, it is too late to harvest. Cut heads from the plant along with at least 6 inches of stem. Cut on a slant to allow water to slide away. Many varieties have side shoots that will continue to develop after the main head is harvested. You may harvest from one plant for up to two months.



Developed by the Pennsylvania Department of Education and Penn State University (Project PA).

This project has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the view or policies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organization imply endorsement by the U.S. Government. USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

