

2023 YEAR OF THE BROCCOLI

Broccoli hails from the Mediterranean region and has been enjoyed there since Roman times. Other European regions eventually caught on and broccoli was popularized in France as “Italian Asparagus” about 1650. The English adopted it about 70 years later.

We have been broccoli fans across the US since the 1920s when ice-packed broccoli heads rode the rails from California to the eastern US. In 2011, the United States produced more than 2 billion pounds of broccoli with a value of over \$750 million on more than 130,000 acres (extension.psu.edu/broccoli).





Basic types

Brassica oleracea, , of the mustard family (Brassicaceae), is a form of cabbage grown for its edible flower buds and stalk. All parts of the plant are edible.

- Broccoli Raab has long slender stems with small heads and lots of leaves. Broccoli Raab is likely to be what the Romans and early Europeans thought of as broccoli.
- Heading broccoli with its large crowns and sturdy stalks is what is grown most widely today. Americans eat 7 pounds each per year!
- Baby broccoli (sometimes called stem broccoli or sprouting broccoli) has gained popularity in recent years. Baby broccoli has small heads and long, tender stems.

Variety/Series Names

- Spring Rapini Broccoli Raab- is an heirloom option. When planted in early spring growers harvest tender, flavorful heads and leaves. Broccoli Raab has a unique flavor, stronger than other broccolis.
- Marathon- is a heading type widely adapted to most growing regions.
- Green Magic- is popular with home gardeners for yield, early maturity and an easy to grow plant.
- Artwork- this AAS winner is a baby broccoli, grown for its long stems and petite heads.



GARDENING TIPS

How To Grow

Broccoli prefers cooler seasons like early spring and fall in most regions. Choose a growing area that has not held broccoli or cabbage (or other close relatives) in the past year or two if possible. Broccoli likes good drainage and air circulation. Full sun is nice but partial shade will work. Six plants in a 4 x 6-foot area will be very happy. Broccoli prefers soil high in nitrogen so work in a balanced fertilizer or some compost while planting. Most gardeners plant either transplants they purchased, or plants they started from seed about 4-6 weeks before planting. Seed should be started indoors about 6 weeks before the last frost date in the spring. Check your seed catalog or seed packet, or with a local extension office, for more information on the best time to plant. For a fall crop, start seeds indoors in August or September. Spread mulch around the plants to hold soil moisture in and prevent weeds. Container grown plants should be planted in a large container-at least 2 gallons with one plant per pot. Water well and regularly. Remove any worms or aphids you find on the plant with a strong stream of water or enlist children to pick the pests off.



How to Harvest

Harvest central heads first when they reach the desired size, are a deep green and are firm with tightly clustered florets. Harvest in the morning, before hot midday temperatures arrive. Home grown broccoli heads may be smaller than what you find in the market. Harvest using a sharp knife, just above where the stalk joins the leaves with approximately 5 inches of stem. Once the primary head is harvested your plant will send side shoots out and supply smaller broccoli heads for as long as cool weather holds. Harvest often to prevent bolting. Once a plant sets yellow flowers, it is finished for the year.

If you have an abundance of broccoli, it freezes well and makes a lovely soup!



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