

Broccoli



Sun: Plant in full sun (6 to 8 hours). Space 18 inches apart within rows or 1 plant per 5- to 7-gallon container. Plant in early August.

Soil: Amend with organic matter to create a well-drained soil. Avoid planting in unamended sandy or heavy clay soils. If the soil test shows pH is below 6.2, apply lime in May or June as recommended.

For proper drainage in a container garden, use potting mix and ensure containers have drainage holes. Alternatively, consider using self-watering containers.

Water: Keep soil consistently moist but not saturated. Apply 1 to 2 inches of water each week. Avoid wetting leaves to prevent fungal disease. Mulch helps retain moisture.

Plant: Start seedlings 6 weeks before planting and slowly harden off 1 week before moving to the garden. If buying transplants, choose those with healthy color and a stocky appearance. Avoid plants with flowers. Dig the planting hole as deep as the root ball. Firmly pat down the soil and water deeply.

Fertilize: In the absence of a soil test, apply an all-purpose fertilizer (8-8-8 or 10-10-10) at planting, according to label directions. Apply a small amount of calcium nitrate alongside plants, 4 to 6 inches from the stem (side-dress), 3 to 4 weeks after planting to stimulate growth. Apply nitrogen again when heads begin to show.

Insects/Diseases/Weeds: Scout plants frequently for insect/disease damage. Use insecticidal soap (for soft-bodied insects) or Bt dust or spray (for caterpillars, or worms). Spray fungicide regularly to suppress common fungal diseases. Always follow label instructions. Mulch inhibits weeds and diseases.

Harvest: Harvest at 55 to 75 days, before flowers open and show yellow. Harvest time varies depending on the variety.

Other: Leave as much central stem as possible when harvesting the broccoli head. Doing this will stimulate smaller, lateral heads to grow.

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