



ALMANAC

Thursday, May 1, 2025



ORDER YOUR ALMANAC TODAY!

[HOME](#) > [GARDENING](#) > [GROWING GUIDES](#)

How to Grow Broccoli: The Complete Guide



Photo Credit: Pixabay

Bot *Brassica*
ani- *oleracea*
cal (*Italica*
Na *group*)
me:

Pla [Vegetabl](#)
nt [e](#)
Typ
e:

Su [Full Sun](#)
n
Exp
os-
ure
:

FREE GUIDE!

fiverr.

Need a social media marketer?

Meet you



Flo [Yellow](#)
wer
Col
or:

Planting, Growing, and Harvesting Broccoli

By [Catherine Boeckmann](#)
Last Updated: April 24, 2025



Sign up for daily gardening advice and tips

SIGN UP

ADVERTISEMENT



The Almanac Garden Planner - Use It Free for 7 Days!

Plan your 2025 garden with our award-winning Garden Planner.

TRY NOW

A fall garden delight, broccoli is easy to grow in the home garden. The deliciously tender spears are also exceptionally good for you—the “crown jewel of nutrition.” Plant in mid-summer for a fall crop. Follow our guide for a bountiful harvest!

ADVERTISEMENT

The common type of broccoli in grocery stores is “Calabrese broccoli” (named after Calabria in Italy). Planted in mid-spring, this variety produces big green heads on thick stalks.

Closely related to cauliflower, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, and kohlrabi, this cole crop is worth growing for its nutritional content alone. It's rich in vitamins and minerals and a good source of Vitamin A, potassium, folic acid, iron, and fiber.

Broccoli takes a long time to mature, so be patient! Once you harvest the main head of a broccoli plant, it will often keep producing smaller side shoots that can be enjoyed for months.

ADVERTISEMENT

- [How to Grow Kohlrabi: The Complete Guide](#)
- [How to Grow Brussels Sprouts: The Complete Guide](#)
- [Guide on Harvesting Vegetables: When to Harvest Most Common Crops](#)

PLANTING

Broccoli should be planted in a site that gets full sun (6 to 8 hours of sunlight per day).

Lack of sunlight may produce thin, leggy plants and subpar heads.

Plant in a bed of moist, fertile soil that drains well. To increase fertility before you plant, in early spring, work in 2 to 4 inches of rich compost (humus) or a thin layer of manure.

The soil pH should ideally be slightly acidic, between 6.0 and 7.0.

When to Plant Broccoli


- Broccoli is a cool-season crop, so it should be started in early- to mid-spring (depending on your climate) for an early summer crop or in mid- to late summer for a fall crop. High temperatures will affect the development of the broccoli head (the harvestable part), so the goal is to get

- Broccoli seeds are capable of germinating in soil temperatures as low as 40°F (4°C), but warmer soil is preferred and will greatly speed up development.
- For **spring plantings**, broccoli may be started indoors or outdoors a few weeks ahead of your [last spring frost date](#).

Consult our [Planting Calendar](#) to see recommended dates for your area. Generally speaking:

- Start seeds indoors 6 to 8 weeks before your last frost date.
- Sow seeds outdoors 2 to 3 weeks before your last frost date, or as soon as the soil can be worked in the spring.
- For **fall plantings** (best in warm climates), sow seeds outdoors 85 to 100 days before the first fall frost, when soil and ambient temperatures are high.

Make the Most of Your Available Space
See how many plants will fit and which crops can occupy the same space in your garden at different times of the year.



Broccoli (10 plants) - row length: 17' 4"

[Try the Almanac Garden Planner Here for Free >>](#)

How to Plant Broccoli

- If starting seeds outdoors, sow seeds 1/2-inch deep and 3 inches apart.
- Once seedlings reach a height of 2 to 3

- If you started seeds indoors, plant transplants that are 4 to 6 weeks old (and have 4 or 5 leaves) outdoors, 12 to 20 inches apart, in holes slightly deeper than their container depth.
- Space rows of broccoli 3 feet apart. (Closer spacing yields smaller main heads but more secondary heads.)
- Water well at the time of planting.

Video Demo of Sowing Broccoli

For those who wish to start sowing in pots, watch Ben in this video show you how it's done! See the whole process from sowing to transplanting to broccoli care and harvesting.

ADVERTISEMENT

...ing Broccoli from Sowing to Harvest



GROWING

- Plants thrive in temperatures between 65° and 70°F (18° and 21°C).
- Fertilize broccoli three weeks after transplanting seedlings into the garden. Use a low-nitrogen fertilizer, such as a 5-10-10 formula.
- Thin when young plants reach 2 to 3 inches tall. Plants should be between 12 and 20 inches apart.
- Provide consistent soil moisture with regular watering, especially in drought conditions. Water at least 1 to 1 1/2 inches per week.
- Do not get developing broccoli heads wet when watering, as it can encourage rot.
- Roots are very shallow, so try not to disturb the plants—suffocate weeds with mulch instead of weeding.
- Mulching around plants will also help to keep soil temperatures down.

- To promote the growth of a second head after the first has been harvested, maintain an active feeding and watering schedule.



Types

- **‘Calabrese’** is an heirloom broccoli (from Italy) with large heads and prolific side shoots that will mature for harvesting. Great for fall planting, too.
- **‘Flash’** is a fast-growing, heat-resistant hybrid with good side-shoot production once the central head is cut. Great for fall planting, too.
- **‘Green Goliath’** is heat-tolerant with giant heads and prolific side shoots.
- **‘Green Duke’** is heat tolerant and an early variety that’s especially good for Southern gardeners.
- **‘Green Magic’** is heat tolerant;

- **‘Paragon’** has extra-long spears; excellent for freezing.

HARVESTING

- Harvest broccoli in the morning, when the buds of the head are firm and tight, just before the heads flower.
- If you do see yellow petals, harvest immediately, as the quality will decrease rapidly.
- Cut heads from the plant, taking at least 6 inches of stem. Make a slanted cut on the stalk to allow water to slide away. (Water can pool and rot the center of a flat-cut stalk, ruining the secondary heads.)
- Most varieties have side-shoots that will continue to develop after the main head is harvested. You can harvest from one plant for many weeks, in some cases, from spring to fall, if your summer isn't too hot.
- [Learn more tips on harvesting broccoli.](#)

How to Store Broccoli

- Store broccoli in the refrigerator for up to 5 days.
- If you wash before storing, make sure to dry it thoroughly.
- Broccoli can be blanched and frozen for up to one year. [Learn how to](#)



GARDENING PRODUCTS



Vegetable 4-6-2

\$8.99

BUY NOW



Houseplant 8-3-1

\$9.99

BUY NOW



All Purpose 4-6-2

\$8.79

BUY NOW

PESTS/DISEASES

Broccoli Pests and Diseases

Pest/Disease	Type	Symptoms	Control/Prevention
<u>Aphids</u>	Insect	Curled, misshapen/yellow leaves: distorted	Grow companion plants; knock off with water sprav:

Pest/Disease	Type	Symptoms	Control/Prevention
		ment); sooty, black mold.	around plants; wipe leaves with a 1 to 2 percent solution of water and dish soap (no additives) every 2 to 3 days for 2 weeks; add native plants to invite beneficial insects (such as ladybugs).
<u>Cabbage loopers</u>	Insect	Large, ragged holes in leaves from larval feeding; defoliation; stunted or bored heads; excrement.	Handpick off plants; add native plants to invite beneficial insects; spray larvae with insecticidal soap or <i>Bacillus thuringiensis</i> (Bt)—a natural, bacterial pesticide; use row covers; remove plant debris at end of season.
<u>Cabbage root maggots</u>	Insect	White maggots become gray flies that resemble small houseflies. Wilted/stunted plants; off-color leaves; larvae feeding on roots.	Use collars made of plastic or tin foil around seedling stems; monitor adults with yellow sticky traps; use row covers; destroy crop residue; till soil in fall; rotate crops.

Pest/Disease	Type	Symptoms	Control/Prevention
		holes or are skeletonized; heads bored; dark green excrement; yellowish eggs laid singly on leaf undersides.	plants to invite beneficial insects; grow companion plants (especially thyme); spray Bt (<i>Bacillus thuringiensis</i>).
Clubroot	Fungus	Wilted/stunted plants; yellow leaves; roots appear swollen/distorted.	Destroy infected plants; solarize soil; maintain soil pH of around 7.2; disinfect tools; rotate crops.
Downy Mildew	Fungus	Yellow, angular spots on upper leaf surfaces that turn brown; white/purple/gray cottony growth on leaf undersides only; distorted leaves; defoliation.	Remove plant debris; choose resistant varieties; ensure good air circulation; avoid overhead watering.
<u>Nitrogen deficiency</u>	Deficiency	Bottom leaves turn yellow and the problem continues toward the top of the plant.	Supplement with a high nitrogen (but low phosphorus) fertilizer or blood meal. Blood meal is a quick nitrogen fix for yellowing leaves.

Pest/Disease	Type	Symptoms	Control/Prevention
		leaves; shriveled seeds; eggs, often keg-shape, in clusters on leaf undersides.	(bugs emit odor, wear gloves); destroy eggs; spray nymphs with insecticidal soap; use row covers; weed; till soil in fall.
White rust	Fungus	Chalk-white blisters mainly on leaf undersides; small, yellow-green spots or blisters, sometimes in circular arrangement, on upper leaf surfaces; possible distortion or galls; flowers/stems may also be infected. More common with warm days and cool/moist nights.	Destroy infected plants; choose resistant varieties; weed; destroy crop residue; rotate crops.

Pest/Disease	Type	Symptoms	Control/Prevention
Whiteflies	Insect	Sticky “honey-dew” (excrement); sooty, black mold; yellow/ silver areas on leaves; wilted/stunted plants; distortion; adults fly if disturbed; some species transmit viruses.	Remove infested leaves/plants; use handheld vacuum to remove pests; spray water on leaf undersides in morning/evening to knock off pests; monitor adults with yellow sticky traps; spray with insecticidal soap; invite beneficial insects and hummingbirds with native plants; weed; use reflective mulch.

WIT AND WISDOM

- Originally, broccoli was eaten for its stems.
- Early Roman farmers called broccoli “the five green fingers of Jupiter.”
- Once you’ve gotten broccoli down pat, why not try growing one of its relatives? See our Growing Guides for [cauliflower](#), [cabbage](#), [brussels sprouts](#), [rutabaga](#), [kale](#), and [turnips](#)!

CREAM OF BROCCOLI SOUP

BROCCOLI NOODLE CASSEROLE

CHICKEN AND BROCCOLI ALFREDO

BROCCOLI AND CHEDDAR STRATA

**BROCCOLI AND CHEESE TWICE-
BAKED POTATOES**

COOKING NOTES

One ounce of broccoli has an equal amount of calcium as one ounce of milk. Learn more about the [amazing health benefits of broccoli](#).

VEGETABLES

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Catherine Boeckmann



Catherine Boeckmann loves nature,

She leads digital content for the Almanac website, and is also a certified master gardener in the state of Indiana. [Read More from Catherine Boeckmann](#)

MORE LIKE THIS



**How to Grow
Kohlrabi: The
Complete Guide**



**How to Grow
Brussels
Sprouts: The
Complete Guide**



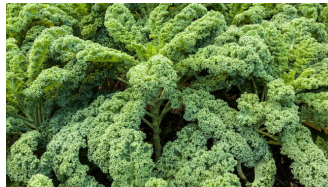
**Guide on
Harvesting
Vegetables:
When to
Harvest Most
Common Crops**



**Top 10
Healthiest
Fruits and
Vegetables to
Grow in Your
Garden**



**Vegetable
Nutrition:
Healthy Veggies
to Add to Your
Diet**



**How to Grow
Kale: The
Complete Guide**



GROW YOUR BEST GARDEN YET

Join The Old Farmer's Almanac Gardening Club Today!

LEARN MORE

ADVERTISEMENT

COMMENTS

ADD A COMMENT

Lana (not verified) 2 years 10 months ago

my first time growing broccoli. growing tall and produces 1 shoot with one little head. 3 or 4 other take off on the stem and only 1 single head . grow- ing in gardening soil for veks. and compost. one feeding. it has grown very tall and has large leaves. what am I doing wrong?? By head I mean 1 little

ADVERTISEMENT

[REPLY](#)

Geri Reski (not verified) 3 years ago

Ahhh...this was the best year I have ever had for my broccoli plants! I have a greenhouse which was heated all winter but just heated to keep temps above freezing. They grew magnificently! Am now on third planting (it's April). Aphids are making a comeback since it's warmer. Cut away leaves that get any aphids on them and dispose outside of greenhouse.

Love this fast growing plant and was my most successful with large, green heads!

[REPLY](#)

Patricia Dennie (not verified) 3 years ago

Love all the informative planting information you provide for all our gardening needs. Just planted broccoli in our raised garden along with cauliflower and Brussels sprouts. We have onions in between with a few marigolds on the outside. The high in NW Ark is 40-66 degrees

rive, we may have aphids to deal with. Just getting prepared. What type of Soap do you advise to use? Dr Bonners (Castile) without any additives? What ratio? Spray infected leaves & ground? Thanks for the expertise guidance.

REPLY

Leslie (not verified) 3 years 2 months ago

What of the prodigious amount of foliage? Can the leaves be used as greens? I suspect they are rather strong/bitter but they say bitter is good for digestion. Ideas?

REPLY

The Editors 3 years 2 months ago

The leaves of broccoli and its relatives (kohlrabi, cauliflower) are absolutely edible! In the kitchen, we would recommend treating them like kale or collard greens, as they can be a little tough when eaten raw.

REPLY

Geri Reski (not verified) 3 years 11 months ago

I did spray soapy water on the broccoli leaves as aphids had arrived...the leaves became spotted and dried up a few days after...why is that? I wound up cutting off leaves/stems ...

REPLY

Peggy Cross (not verified) 4 years 2 months ago

Those darn squirrels are so cute, but they are nibbling away at my young broccoli leaves! Every day a notice just a couple more leaves gone. It could also be rats, as I do see them around this urban neighborhood which borders on wilderness. I have never seen a bunny, so I don't think it's bunnies. Deer would just take out the whole plant in one go! That stinky deer spray may be helping a little. any other ideas?

REPLY

Jessica (not verified) 4 years 2 months ago

How the heck do you keep the rabbits from destroying your broccoli??

REPLY

The Editors 4 years 2 months ago

The bunnies are tough characters, for sure. Here are our best ideas <https://www.almanac.com/pest/rabbits>

Note the fencing ideas in particular.

We hope this helps!

REPLY

Steve Morgan (not verified) 4 years 7 months ago

I have planted Broccoli on your recommendation in my backyard garden it is doing well. This is the first time I have planted some vegetable. Thank You!

REPLY

MORE COMMENTS

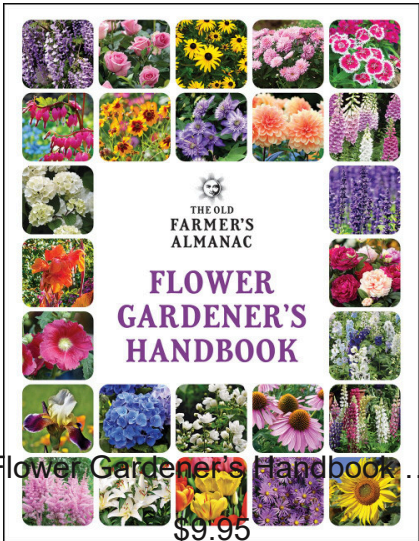
**THE OLD
FARMER'S STORE**



Gardener's Scrub - 2 Bar Gift ...

\$15.95

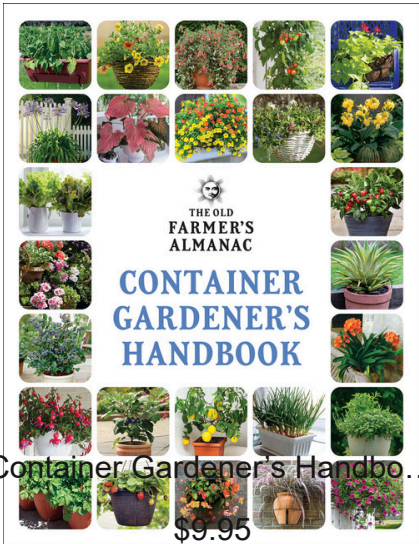
BUY NOW



Flower Gardener's Handbook ...

\$9.95

BUY NOW



Container Gardener's Handbo...

\$9.95

BUY NOW



Moon Phase Wildflower Seed ...

\$9.95

BUY NOW

ADVERTISEMENT

Our Brands

[The Old Farmer's](#)

[Almanac for Kids](#)

[Yankee Magazine](#)

[Family Tree Magazine](#)

[NH Business Review](#)

[New Hampshire](#)

[Magazine](#)

[Yankee Custom](#)

[Marketing](#)

Resources

[About Us](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Free Daily Newsletter](#)

[Webcam](#)

[Advertise with Us](#)

[Media Relations](#)

[Sell the Almanac](#)

[Where to Buy](#)

[Terms of Use](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Cookie List](#)

[Do Not Sell or Share](#)

[My Personal](#)

[Information](#)

Connect with Us



©2025 [Yankee Publishing Inc.](#), An Employee-Owned Company

1121 Main Street | P.O. Box 520 | Dublin, NH 03444