

## BROCCOLI

Broccoli has increased in popularity considerably in recent years. This vegetable, sometimes known as Italian sprouting broccoli, is a cluster of undeveloped flower buds. Two crops--spring and fall--can be grown in Kansas. Small secondary heads can be harvested for several weeks following the cutting of the large central head.



### Varieties

Green Comet, Premium Crop (late), Baccus, Green Duke, Southern Comet, Prominence and Packman are popular green-headed varieties.

### When to plant

Set plants in the garden in late March to early April, before the danger of frost has past. Early planting is essential so that plant heads can develop before the onset of hot weather. Plant fall broccoli plants in early August or direct seed in early July.

### Care

Select broccoli plants that are small and stocky. Avoid tall spindly plants. Weak tall plants often "bolt" or produce a premature head which will never enlarge. Leave as much of the root system intact as possible when transplanting and set the plants slightly deeper than the container in which they grew.

Broccoli requires a lot of fertilizer to produce a large plant and a large head. The use of starter-fertilizer solution is beneficial to encourage early growth. Sprinkle additional fertilizer--along the row every 2-3 weeks as the crop develops.

Another important practice in successful growing is to apply water in periods of drought. One inch of water per week is sufficient when rainfall is not available. Provide adequate water as the head starts to develop. Since the root system is shallow, be careful in hoeing around the plants so you do not damage plant roots.

## **Harvesting**

Harvest the head before the flowers start to open or before yellow centers of the flowers start to show. Even a day's delay may be critical since overmature heads lose quality and nutritional value.

Usually 4-5 inches of the stem is also tender and can be used with the head. Continue to cut small side heads until hot weather causes them to be strongly flavored.

## **Common concerns**

Cabbage worms

Aphids

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