



Mercy Wellness Seed Program Growing Guides

Broccoli:

Start: Broccoli is a cool-season crop, so it should be planted in early spring or late summer for the best results. High mid-summer temperatures will stunt its growth, so the goal is to get broccoli to mature before or after high temperatures are expected. 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: Start seeds indoors 6 to 8 weeks before your last frost date. Sow outdoors 2 to 3 weeks before your last frost date, or as soon as the soil can be worked.

Water: Provide consistent soil moisture with regular watering, especially in drought conditions. Water at least 1 to 1 ½ inches per week. Do not get developing broccoli heads wet when watering, as it can encourage rot.

Soil: Plant in a bed of moist, fertile soil that drains well. Soil pH should be slightly acidic, between 6.0 and 7.0. To increase fertility before you plant, in early spring, work in 2 to 4 inches of rich compost or a thin layer of manure. (Learn more about soil amendments and preparing soil for planting.)

Light: Full sun.

Fertilize: Fertilize broccoli three weeks after transplanting seedlings into the garden. Use a low-nitrogen fertilizer.

Harvest: 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.

Notes: Store broccoli in the refrigerator for up to 5 days. If you wash before storing, make sure to dry thoroughly

