



## Design for Everyday Living

# growing broccoli

**N. Carl Hardin**  
Extension Specialist  
Professor  
Horticulture

Broccoli is one of the best liked dark green vegetables and is delicious if properly prepared. It is a good source of vitamins A, C, and riboflavin. It is also high in iron and calcium and is a nonfattening food.

Because of its many merits, this vegetable should be grown in more West Virginia gardens. Good broccoli is easy to grow and easy to cook.

### VARIETY

Green Comet is the variety that should be grown in West Virginia.

### SOIL

Any good garden soil in West Virginia is suitable for growing broccoli. The soil must not be acid, however. The pH should be about 6.5.

### FERTILIZATION

Broadcast about 5 pounds of 5-10-10 fertilizer for each 100 square feet of area. This should be applied and worked into the soil about one week before the plants are set.

### OBTAINING PLANTS

Broccoli plants may be difficult to obtain in many places, so it would be wise to grow some of your own. Broccoli plants are grown just the same as cabbage plants. The seed should be sowed in a hot-bed or in a box in a sunny window about February 20, for most of the state. Just as soon as the first true leaves appear the plants should be reset to stand 1½ inches apart each way. Broccoli, like cabbage, has a tendency to get too spindly if grown where light is not good. It would be best, therefore, to grow the plants outside in a hotbed or coldframe rather than in the house.



### SETTING THE PLANTS

Broccoli plants are not as hardy as cabbage, so it is best to set the broccoli a few days later than the earliest setting date for cabbage. For most of the state the plants should be set about **April 10** for the early crop and about **July 1** for the fall crop.

The plants should be set 18 inches apart in the row and the rows should be 30 inches apart.

The plants should be watered with a starter solution when they are set in the garden or field. The starter solution is made by dissolving one cup of 5-10-10 fertilizer in 12 quarts of water. Stir and let stand for a few hours. Pour one cup of this solution around the roots of the plant as it is being set out. Immediately fill the hole with soil and gently press it around the roots.

Commercial growers of broccoli will find it better to use a commercial starter solution that will work well in a plant setting machine.

### PROTECT EARLY PLANTS FROM ROOT MAGGOT

This small fly deposits eggs at the base of the broccoli plants and in cracks in the soil nearby. The eggs hatch in about one week and the maggots feed on the stem and roots.

## NITRATING

It would help materially in getting large tender heads on the broccoli to sidedress about three times with a nitrogen fertilizer, such as nitrate of soda. Make the first application after the plants have been set in the field about three weeks and then make two more applications at two-week intervals. Each application should consist of one tablespoonful of the nitrogen fertilizer applied on top of the ground out about 3 inches from the plant. A circle around each plant is best.

If a nitrogen fertilizer is not available, work a quart of fresh chicken manure into the soil around each plant three weeks after setting out the plants.

## WORMS

A disappointing experience is to cut a head of broccoli and in preparing it for cooking, find that it is full of green worms. The worms reduce the value of the broccoli and cause considerable damage to the plant. Contact your local county Extension office for current pest control recommendations.

## CLUBROOT

Clubroot is a disease which causes overgrowths or swellings of the underground stem and roots of cauliflower, cabbage, broccoli, etc. Once the organism responsible for this disease is introduced into a field or garden, it will remain troublesome for 3 to 7 years even though no cruciferous crops are grown during the period. The swellings or "clubs" on the roots interfere with the ability of the plant to take up food from the soil and as a

result such plants never produce a crop.

### Control:

- (1) Use only plants whose roots show no suspicious swellings.
- (2) Rotate crops so that closely related crops do not follow each other on the same soil each year.

## HOW TO COOK

Broccoli should be cooked as soon after cutting as possible in order to retain the maximum amount of vitamin C and flavor. Split the stem four ways to help it cook more quickly. In cooking use only a small amount of boiling salted water in a covered pan. Be sure to handle the broccoli gently to prevent the delicate flowerlets from breaking. A pair of kitchen tongs will give the broccoli a safe trip from the saucepan to the vegetable dish.

Serve broccoli piping hot with butter, fat drippings, or a colorful yellow cheese sauce.

## HOW TO FREEZE

Discard the large leaves and tough stalks. Wash well and soak, head down, in salted water (4 teaspoons of salt to one gallon of cold water) for about one-half hour. Split lengthwise so heads are not more than 1½ inches across. Scald in boiling water for four minutes, drain, pack in containers, and freeze at once.

John Jett March 1996

The use of names of products or manufacturers in this publication does not constitute endorsement. Names are used only to provide knowledge for potential users. A number of similar and satisfactory products are available under a wide variety of trade names.

Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Institution

Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics, West Virginia University and the United States Department of Agriculture, Cooperating. Robert Maxwell, Interim Director, Morgantown, West Virginia. Published in Furtherance of Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914.