

Broccoli



Broccoli has been around for more than 2000 years, although Americans have grown it for only 100 years.

Broccoli is native to the Mediterranean and East Asia and is believed to be the first of the cole crops to evolve from the wild species of kale or cabbage and was cultivated by the Romans.

Breeders have improved the adaptability to growing areas, enhancing quality, and increasing disease resistance.

Broccoli cultivars can now be labeled spring, summer or winter based on their cold and heat tolerances.

The roots can be found up to 3 feet away from the plant.

After a few months of growing some of the roots of a broccoli plant will reach a depth of over 5 feet.

It takes about 144,000 broccoli seed to make up a pound.

In 2005, Yuma County grew broccoli on about 25,000 acres with a value of over \$65 million and was Arizona's number one broccoli producing county.

Yuma broccoli production has increased over 25% since 2002.

The mature broccoli head can be from 4-7 inches across and can weigh up to 1 pound.

During the sixteenth century, the plant was grown in almost exclusively in France and Italy.

Little was known about this vegetable until the 1920's, when the first commercially grown broccoli was grown and harvested in Brooklyn, New York. In 1923, the D'Arrigo Brothers Company made a trial planting of Italian sprouting broccoli in California. A few crates were sent to Boston and by 1925 the broccoli market was established.

The word broccoli comes from the Italian brocco meaning arm branch.

Broccoli is a member of the Cruciferae family which means it's it is actually related botanically to cabbage, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, collards, kale and kohlrabi.

The word broccolo is the diminutive form of brocco and refers to cabbage sprout, while broccoli is plural and refers to the numerous shoots in the form of Brassica Oleracea. There are actually two types of broccoli: sprouting/Italian broccoli (*Brassica Oleracea Italica*) the most common, and heading broccoli (*Brassica Oleracea*) which looks like cauliflower.

Broccoli grows best in areas with a cool climate and moist soil.

During the winter months, November to March, broccoli is grown and harvested in Yuma.

Planting is done by direct seeding or by transplanting seedlings started in a greenhouse.

Although various varieties have slightly different harvesting time, most reach maturity from seed in 100 to 120 days.

Over 30,000 plants can grow in only one acre.

A broccoli field may be harvested 2 to 3 times to harvest all the mature broccoli.

Ideally, broccoli should be harvested during the cooler months in order to ensure the longest storage time.

It is harvested with eight to 10 inches of stem left intact and the heads should be cooled immediately to prevent opening and discoloration.

Broccoli may be packed in the field or transported to a processing facility where it is cut and packaged.

Broccoli is known as the "Crown of Jewel Nutrition" because it is rich in vitamins and minerals and is a good source of Vitamin A , Potassium, Folic Acid, Iron and Fiber.

Over the last 25 years, broccoli consumption has increased over 940 percent!

Broccoli has as much calcium ounce per ounce as milk and contains a few important phytochemicals: beta-carotene, indoles and isothiocyanates. Phytochemicals prevent carcinogens (cancer causing substance) from forming. They also stop carcinogens from getting to target cells and help boost enzymes that detoxify carcinogens.

The edible portion of the plant is the flowering head and stem, which must be harvested by hand, even in commercial fields, before the flowers open.

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