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#### Horticulture News

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It soon will be time to start cold crops like broccoli from seed! 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, Emperor, Green Valiant, 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 passed. 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. Broccoli requires a lot of fertilizer to produce a large plant and a large head. Fertilize at planting. Sprinkle additional fertilizer—side dress—along the row every 2–3 weeks as the crop develops. Provide adequate water as the head starts to develop.

Harvesting. Harvest the head before the flowers start to open or before yellow centers of the flowers start to show. 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.