

# How to Grow Your Own Broad Beans

Broad beans are one of the world's most ancient crops still in cultivation, and they're also one of the easiest to get right. They aren't fussy about soil as long as it isn't waterlogged.

Standard broad bean plants grow to around 120cm tall, but there are also dwarf varieties that only reach 30 to 45cm high. These are ideal for small gardens and containers and don't need staking.

## Sowing

- Prepare the ground well by digging it over – [here is a guide](#)
- For best results, grow in ground that has been enriched with compost or well-rotted manure
- Dig two parallel trenches 5cm deep and 20cm apart. Space these double rows 60cm apart
- Sow seeds at 20cm intervals in each trench
- Sow extra seeds at the end of the rows. These plants can later be transplanted into any gaps in the rows where seeds fail to germinate
- For a continuous summer supply of broad beans, sow at monthly intervals until end of May

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Sow												
Harvest												

## How to look after me

**Soil:** Free-draining, any

**Position:** Sunny

**Location:** Outdoors, container

## Did You Know?

Broad beans were used in Ancient Rome to vote in the Senate – a white bean for yes and a black one for no

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## Growing

- Hoe regularly to remove any weeds growing around the plants while they are young
- Water well when the first flowers appear
- If the weather turns dry after the pods appear, water copiously
- Tall varieties need staking. Push a wooden stake into the ground at each corner of the double rows and tie string or garden twine between them at 20cm intervals
- To encourage beans to ripen more quickly, pick off the top 5cm of the plants when the bean pods first start to swell
- This also deters blackfly, an aphid pest. If you get a serious attack, spray the entire crop with blackfly treatment



## Harvesting

- Begin harvesting the fruits when you can see the shape of the beans swelling inside the pods
- Start with the lowest pods first and harvest in stages
- Remove each pod from the plant by twisting it sharply in a downward direction
- Don't leave beans on the plant to get too large or they will become tough and fibrous
- You can also harvest immature beans and cook them whole with the pod. They are sweeter this way

## David's Top Tip

When you've finished harvesting, dig the plants into the soil. This adds nitrogen to feed the next vegetable crop – ideal for hungry plants like brassicas

