



## GROWING GREAT BROADBEANS

Even if you're not terribly keen on the taste of broadbeans, growing them over the sparse winter months is a great idea for your garden's soil. You can use them as a green manure crop if harvested before flowering.

### Soil Preparation

- pH 6.5-7.5: add dolomite if soil is too acidic
- Plenty of potassium, phosphorus and calcium is needed, but do not add manures rich in nitrogen.
- Legumes, such as broadbeans, follow green manure crops in crop rotation cycles. If you didn't grow a green manure crop over summer (and who does??), put them in after your heavy feeders. Add compost to the soil before planting.

### Seed Sowing

- Dampen the soil from the day before. Plant into moist soil
- Sow the seeds 5-10cm deep, 10-20cm apart, in rows 40cm apart.
- Sow in mid-autumn though this depends on frosts. If spring frosts are common, plant in early winter.
- Plant in blocks, to protect against potential wind damage.
- Germination should occur in 10-14 days. Soak seeds overnight in a dilute solution of liquid seaweed to speed germination.
- Seed saving – leave a few healthy pods to fully develop on the vine. Stored properly, seeds will last up to 10 years.



### Caring for Broad Beans

- Staking is always required as the plants become top heavy and may snap. Use stakes every metre and string between the stakes and around the stalks. Do this as they grow so you may end up having to do this about 3 times as the stalks get taller.
- Winter rainfall is usually adequate. Increase watering as pods appear.
- Mulch with well-rotted straw.
- In early spring, once you see the first pods starting to appear, nip off the growing stem at the top of each stalk. This then forces the plant to put its energy into the developing pods rather than putting on more green growth.



### Pests and Diseases

- Chocolate brown spot = fungal disease (too close together or too much N in soil)
- Root rot or wilt = too wet soil (see black within cut stems)

### As a green manure crop

- Slash plants before they flower. Add manure or compost over the top and allow the worms to help the breakdown.