



## HOME GARDEN BROCCOLI RAAB

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Broccoli-raab (also known as rapa, rapine, rappone, fall and spring raab or turnip broccoli) is a rapidly growing annual when grown in spring, but a biennial in fall plantings. The leaves with the seedstalks, before blooming, are cut for greens and are sold to ethnic markets (primarily Italian).

It is grown for two purposes: 1) for greens, and 2) for greens plus the unopened flower buds and stems.

There are several varieties of broccoli-raab. In general, there are two types, namely: "Broccoli-raab Fall" and "Broccoli-raab Spring." They are essentially the same except that the fall strains tend to form flower heads a little earlier than the spring varieties. There is generally very little difference between the two. Some of the fall strains will overwinter better than the spring varieties.

Some of the varieties listed are Annual (Fina 2), Rappone, Rapa, Fall and Spring raab.

**Soils** – This crop may be grown in a variety of soils. The heavier loams will generally produce the greatest yields, but for early spring growth and overwintering in the east, a lighter, well-drained, sandy loam is best. Soils should be well drained, high in organic matter and well prepared. A pH of 6.0 to 6.5 is desirable.

**Fertilizers** – Leafy vegetables require quick, continuous growth for best quality. They need nitrogen especially for good color and tenderness. For the average soils use 2 pounds of 10-10-10 per 100 square feet before planting. Sidedress with ½ oz of nitrogen per 100 square feet, 3 to 5 weeks after emergence. If the crop is overwintered, another such sidedressing should be applied in late winter, just prior to new growth.

**Planting** – Rows may be 18 to 36 inches apart and plants should be 1½ to 3 inches apart. One to 1½ pounds of seed will plant one acre.

Planting Dates	Coastal		
	Plain	Piedmont	Mountains
Spring	Feb 1 - Apr 15	Feb 15 - Apr 30	Mar 1
Fall	Aug 1 - Sep 15	July 15 - Sep 15	Aug 15

**Culture** – No herbicides are cleared for this crop. Regular and shallow cultivation is essential to keep down weeds and grasses. Irrigation is beneficial, especially for the fall crop, since leafy vegetables require adequate moisture for continuous growth and high quality.

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**Insects\*** – A wide variety of insects and diseases similar to those of cabbage and broccoli may attack this crop.

**Harvesting** – Broccoli-raab is often harvested for greens similarly to mustard, kale and turnip greens. Leaves are cut when 4 to 8 inches high and sold loose in bushel hampers or tied in 1- to 2-pound bunches.

This crop goes to seed readily. It makes several small flower heads which are cut, just as in regular broccoli, before the flower buds open. These flower heads usually average about 1 to 1½ inches in diameter. The stems of these heads are cut to a length of 8 to 10 inches and tied in bunches of 1 to 2 pounds each. Occasionally, it is sold loose in bushel baskets. A bunch usually contains about ⅓ to ½ flower heads and stems and the remainder is

leaves. In cooking, the leaves, stems and flower heads are cooked and eaten just as turnip greens or regular broccoli.

If planted early in the fall or late in the spring, this crop requires about 60 to 65 days from seeding to first harvest of the flower heads. If planted in the late fall harvest is usually delayed until late winter or early spring.

The fall varieties will withstand fairly cold winter weather but even these varieties will be killed if temperature drops much below 15°F, or if heavy freezes occur rather suddenly after a prolonged warm period.

*\* Contact the county extension center for identification of the insect problem and control.*