



Broad Beans

Scientific Name: *Vicia faba*

Irish Name: Ponair



Growing Broad Beans

The Broad Bean is an annual plant, which means its seeds must be planted each year. The plant is very easy to grow and is best sown in autumn (from late October) if the climate is mild, but also grows well if sown from late winter to the end of May. Autumn planting produces an early crop in the spring when few other vegetables are available. This also avoids black fly attacks. It prefers to grow in the open, in a well-drained soil that contains some lime. It can grow about 120 cm in height and usually needs to be staked. There are several varieties of the broad bean and some of the dwarf varieties do not need staking.



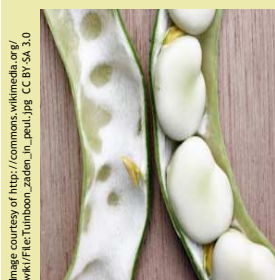
The Broad Bean is a well-known vegetable grown in many gardens. Part of the Pea Family, it is related to peas, French beans and runner beans. Wild relatives of this garden vegetable can be found in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The Broad Bean plant produces sweetly scented white and blackish-purple flowers that are particularly attractive to bees. Once the flowers fade, long seed pods are produced and the seeds, which are in fact the beans that we eat, are a tasty and popular food for humans but are also a source of food for farm animals.



A Problem for Some

In some parts of the world, the beans are poisonous to local people. Those that are affected can develop a blood disorder if they eat the beans or are exposed to the flowers. This disorder is known as favism, referring to the name 'Fava Bean' - the name for the Broad Bean in the USA.



Good for the Soil!

The roots of the broad bean have swellings full of bacteria that 'fix' nitrogen from the air. If left in the soil when the plant dies, these roots put nitrogen into the soil, which benefits nitrogen-loving vegetables that are planted there next.

