



Yates Seed of the Month

May 2008

Broad Beans

Broad beans grow happily right through the cold weather and have the knack of producing their crops in spring and early summer when green vegies can sometimes be a little scarce. That's one reason for their popularity. But they're also loved for their sweet flavour, which is at its best when the pods are young and tender. And, when you grow broad beans, the garden gets an added bonus too. You see, because the plants are legumes, they can grab nitrogen from the air. Then at the end of the season, when the plants are dug into the garden, that extra nitrogen is added to the soil.

Yates Seed of the Month for May, **Exhibition Long Pod**, is the heavily cropping, traditional favourite broad bean but, if space is tight (or the garden's exposed to strong winds), it might be worth trying the shorter (to about one metre) **Evergreen** broad bean that's also available in Yates seed range.

Whichever variety you select, cultivation requirements will be the same. Choose a sunny spot with deep, well-drained soil. Add some Yates Garden Lime and some well-balanced Thrive All Purpose plant food (avoid high-nitrogen fertilisers).

Sow broad bean seeds into damp soil and, as they grow, feed the seedlings with soluble Thrive Flower & Fruit. This plant food is particularly high in potash, which strengthens the plants and improves their disease resistance.

Have some non-toxic Yates Nature's Way Insect Spray on hand so you'll be ready to treat the black aphids that are fond of attacking broad beans. And, in humid weather, watch out for fungal diseases such as rust. If these problems are severe, it may be necessary to use a copper-based fungicide such as Nature's Way Fungus Spray.

Broad beans don't usually set fruit until spring's well and truly here but old timers suggest that pinching back the growing tips when there are plenty of flowers on the plants will hasten pod development (these tips can be used as greens in a stir fry). Think, too, about planting some lavender, borage or Yates Phacelia to attract pollinating bees.

Pick broad bean pods when they're young and tender. At this stage they can even be eaten whole. Just top and tail the small pods before steaming them in the microwave. Dot with butter or olive oil – delicious!

