

Holiday-proof harvests

A new veg planter promises bumper holiday-proof harvests. The Quadgrow from Greenhouse Sensation is a set of pots cleverly designed to keep plants perfectly fed and watered at all times so that they produce stronger roots and bigger crops.

Water is poured into the Quadgrow's hidden 30 Litre reservoir and SmartMats pull the water up to the roots in the pots when the plants need it. There's no more struggling to keep up with the twice daily watering tour and because the Quadgrow's on-demand watering is much more responsive to a plant's needs than hand or dripper watering and because plants are never stood in water, there's definitely no disappointing harvests caused by under or over-watering.

Summer holidays are even taken care of thanks to the simple connector which links the Quadgrow to a water butt or Greenhouse Sensation holiday reservoir to keep the thirstiest plants watered for two weeks or more.

The pots in the Quadgrow are 11 litres, giving plenty of space for healthy root development and the slim design makes it ideal for greenhouses and patios. It's perfect for tomatoes, beans, aubergines, peppers and other tall cropping plants.

Manufactured by Greenhouse Sensation in England from recycled material. Available from www.greenhousesensation.co.uk and priced at £42.90.



The Quadgrow can be used for edible and ornamental plants and has a large 30 litre reservoir

Your free seeds

This month you will find a packet of broccoli 'Green Calabrese' absolutely FREE.

Broccoli has recently been labeled as a super food having been found to contain lots of health-promoting vitamin C and antioxidants. But whether you grow and eat it for this, or just its super taste, we are sure you'll be

delighted with your free seeds.

Calabrese can be sown from March to May for harvesting from September to November.

Plants will produce a large central head followed by smaller, but equally tasty heads which will quickly spring from the leaf axils. The florets are ideal for adding to stir-fries, quiches or soups or delicious when served as a main vegetable.

Sowing: Seeds can either be sown direct into well prepared soil or into cell trays filled with any fresh seed compost. The latter will help to protect the young plants from birds and other pests and give them the best possible start.

Sow seeds individually 6mm (1/4in) deep and cover lightly with sieved compost. Water the tray well and stand on the greenhouse bench or in a cold frame or unheated polytunnel. No heat is necessary.

If you do sow direct, sow thinly in a

nursery row for transplanting at the full spacing (see below) once plants are well established. Don't forget to take necessary precautions against pests (as outlined here) immediately after sowing.

Growing on: Once well established and hardened off plants can be planted out into their final positions in May and June allowing 45cm (18in) between rows and 45cm (18in) between plants. Choose a sunny, well drained site on firm soil, preferably soil which was enriched with well-rotted compost or manure the previous autumn. For best results scatter some general fertiliser such as pelleted sheep or chicken manure or Growmore over the area at the rate of 28-56g (1-2oz) per sq yd/m.

After incorporating the fertiliser and raking level if the soil is very friable, tread it down by walking over the bed on a board to firm it or allow it to settle for a week or two prior to planting.

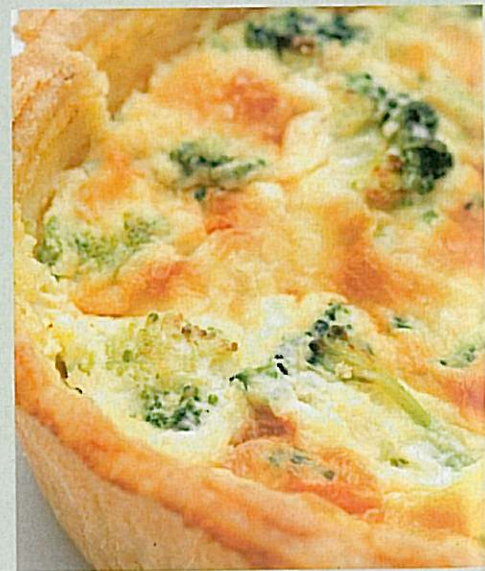
General care: As soon as the plants are safely in the ground water them in thoroughly and lightly scatter some wildlife friendly slug pellets around the rows. Cover with netting or cloches to deter birds and if your brassicas are routinely attacked by cabbage root fly consider placing some felt or plastic cabbage collars around the stems to prevent attack.

Water well during dry spells and lift any netting cover up above the crowns of the plants as they grow. Mulching with organic matter will help to prevent drying out during hot spells in the summer, but is not essential. Plants should remain short and stocky, but may become top heavy on windy sites and may require staking.

Watch for pests such as cabbage

catepillars (see page 48), crush the eggs and remove caterpillars as they are seen. Alternatively cover the plants with fine crop protection netting.

Harvesting: Cut the main head while the tiny flower buds (or beads) are still tightly closed. New sideshoots should soon appear and can be cut as required. If you find you have too many heads they are suitable for freezing for later use.



Broccoli is such a versatile veg in the kitchen

Next month: Don't miss your FREE packet of carrot 'Early Nantes' – only with Kitchen Garden magazine.