

Q: Can I still plant my Fava beans or is it too late?

A: You can still plant Favas—but it depends a bit on what you are planting them for, whether as a vegetable or as a cover crop. *Vicia faba* L or Fava beans are one of the oldest known crop plants, originating from the mediterranean. Small fava seeds were discovered at an archaeological site in northern Israel dating back to 6500 BCE. They are also known as Horse, Broad, Windsor, English Dwarf Bean, Tick, Pigeon, Bell, Haba, Feve and Silkworm beans. Just as an interesting side-note, Fava beans have only 12 Chromosomes, and all of their closest relatives have 14. There don't appear to be any relatives left in the wild, indicating that Favas have been in a close relationship with people and agriculture for a very long time. Favas are currently grown all around the world.

A large winter annual, they need ample winter moisture to set the large pods. When Favas are being grown as a vegetable they are usually planted in February and March, but when they are used as a cover crop they are planted in September to November. If you plant the seeds now they may not come up till late January, and the seeds take four to five months to mature. You may be harvesting a crop in April or May. Plant the seeds 2-3" deep and 5-6" apart. After germinating, thin the seedlings to 10-12" apart so the plants have room to grow. Favas do well in heavy soils. If the rains stop, you will need to provide irrigation on a weekly basis. The plants should not need fertilizing or staking.

Favas are not true beans, but are member of the Vetch family, forming large bushy plants with lovely white-purple flowers that have a light, lovely fragrance. Fava beans are eaten fresh and dried; are used as poultry and livestock feed and when roasted and ground have been used as a hot beverage. The dry beans are about 24% protein, 2% fat, and 50% carbohydrate, and have 700 calories per cup. They are an excellent protein source as long as you are not one of the people of Mediterranean descent who suffer from Favism. Favism is an acute form of anemia caused by a deficiency of an enzyme, glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase (G6PD), which can occur when sensitive individuals eat the beans or inhale the pollen of Favas.

Life map: Embryophyta (plants)> Angiospermae (flowering plants)>Eudicotyledons; Fabales>
Family: Fabaceae> Subfamily: Papilionoideae> Genus: *Vicia*