

Green Tips

Plant and Grow Guides

Peas (GT 111)

For more information and other helpful educational materials, contact:

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Few spring vegetables can be harvested earlier than peas. The quick-growing vines of this annual legume produce pods containing four to ten seeds. Some varieties have smooth seeds and some have wrinkled seeds. The wrinkled seed varieties produce sweeter peas and are usually planted in the spring. The plants are frost hardy. They may even be ready to pick by Memorial Day. Peas grow best as a spring crop. Early peas can be harvested in 54 to 57 days. Main season peas can be picked at 60 to 72 days. Peas are easy to grow and a good source of nutrients. Peas are one of the oldest cultivated vegetables. They have been grown for over 5,000 years.



KINDS OF PEAS

All kinds of peas are best if picked immediately before cooking. Storage causes the sugars to convert to starches and the quality will be lost.

Garden or English peas - the pod is removed and peas are eaten. Peas are picked when pod has filled out and peas are noticeable.

Snap peas- the entire pea pod with peas inside are eaten like snap beans. Peas are picked when peas inside are small and pod is still tender. Seeds past their prime for fresh eating can be dried and later used for soups or stews. Allow the peas to remain on the vine until the pods are withered and brown. Harvest, shell and lay them out to dry for three weeks. Store in an airtight container with a lid.

Sugar or snow peas - the entire pea pod is eaten; peas inside remain tiny. Pods are picked when green, flat and tender; yellowing indicates toughening and age. When picking peas, try not to damage the vines. It is best to cut the pods off instead of pulling.

SOME BASICS

Soil- Plant peas in a well drained soil with some organic matter. This could be compost or composted manure. Peas should be mulched once they have started to grow.

Water- make sure peas get adequate water, especially when the pods are forming.

Fertilizer- Peas should not get too much nitrogen. Fertilizer touching pea seeds can cause problems. Fertilize following your soil test recommendation or apply four pounds of 5-20-20 fertilizer for every 100 square feet of soil. Mix in one pound into the soil before planting and the rest along the rows after planting. Make sure none is on the peas.

Planting- Plant peas 1 to 1 ½ inches deep and 1 inch apart in single or double rows. Space rows 12 to 18 inches apart. Thin plants to 2 to 3 inches between plants in rows OR plant double rows 6 inches apart with 3 feet between single or double rows of tall varieties.

Care- dwarf and intermediate pea varieties are self-supporting. Taller varieties should be staked or trained on a fence for support. This includes sugar peas.

When to plant- Peas grow best in cool weather (40 to 60 degrees F). Light frosts don't kill them. Plant as early as the ground can be worked, March



The variety 'Wando' can be planted later since it can stand more warm weather than other varieties.

To lengthen the harvest period, plant early, mid season and late varieties all at the same time.

A fall crop can be planted July 15 for harvest in September, although it's usually not as successful as a spring crop because of weather and shortening days.

STAKING

There are bush and vining types of peas. Dwarf or bush varieties are usually 18-24 inches tall and do not need staking or take up much space. Tall or vining varieties need support and produce for a longer period of time.

Staking options (train peas to climb) -Use a section of farm fencing or chicken wire supported by metal fence posts. The wire should be 36-48 inches tall. Usually, sugar peas get the tallest.

- Use branches 36 inches tall with the large end pushed into the ground.
- Use stakes with sturdy string strung to make horizontal lines, like a fence.
- Train pea plants to grow up a pole pushed at least 6 inches into the ground.
- Use two or more poles pushed into the ground on an angle with the tops of the poles tied together.

