


Planting, Growing, and Harvesting Pea Plants

 www.almanac.com/plant/peas



Pixabay

Peas are one of the first crops we plant. Plant as soon as the ground can be worked—even if snow falls after you plant them! Here's our guide on how to plant, grow, and harvest peas.

There are three varieties of peas that will suit your garden and cooking needs:

- *Pisum sativum*, which includes both types of garden peas: **sweet peas** (inedible pods) and **snow peas** (edible flat pods with small peas inside).
- *Pisum macrocarpon*, **snap peas** (edible pods with full-size peas).

Pea plants are easy to grow, but have a very limited growing season. Furthermore, peas do not stay fresh long after harvest, so enjoy them while you can!

Planting

- To get the best head start, turn over your pea planting beds in the fall, add manure to the soil, and mulch well.
- As with other legumes, pea roots will fix nitrogen in the soil, making it available for other plants.

- Peas will appreciate a good sprinkling of wood ashes to the soil before planting. Learn more about [soil amendments](#) and [preparing soil for planting](#).
- Sow seeds outdoors 4 to 6 weeks before last [spring frost](#), when soil temperatures reach 45 degrees F. Here are some more tips on [when to start planting peas](#).
- Plant 1 inch deep (deeper if soil is dry) and 2 inches apart.
- Get them in the ground while the soil is still cool, but do not have them sit too long in wet soil. It's a delicate balance of proper timing and weather conditions. For soil that stays wet longer, invest in [raised garden beds](#).
- A blanket of snow won't hurt emerging pea plants, but several days with temperatures in the teens could. Be prepared to plant again.
- Peas are best grown in temperatures below 70 degrees F.
- Check out [this video](#) to learn how to plant peas early while soil is cold.

Care

- Make sure that you have well-drained, humus-rich soil.
- Poke in any seeds that wash out. (A chopstick is an ideal tool for this.)
- Be sure, too, that you don't fertilize the soil too much. Peas are especially sensitive to too much nitrogen, but they may like a little bonemeal, for the phosphorus content.
- Though adding compost or manure to the soil won't hurt, peas don't need heavy doses of fertilizer. They like phosphorus and potassium.
- Water sparsely unless the plants are wilting. Do not let plants dry out, or no pods will be produced.
- For tall and vine varieties, establish [poles or a trellis](#) at time of planting. Look at [this video](#) to find out how!
- Do not hoe around plants to avoid disturbing fragile roots.
- It's best to rotate pea crops every year or two to avoid a buildup of soil-borne diseases.

Pests/Diseases

Harvest/Storage

- Keep your peas well picked to encourage more pods to develop.
- Pick peas in the morning after the dew has dried. They are crispiest then.
- Always use two hands when you pick peas. Secure the vine with one hand and pull the peas off with your other hand.
- Peas can be frozen or kept in the refrigerator for about 5 days. Place in paper bags, then wrap in plastic.
- If you missed your peas' peak period, you can still pick, dry, and shell them for use in winter soups.

Recommended Varieties

- 'Snowbird' (snow pea), resistant to fusarium wilt
- 'Sugar Ann' (snap pea), early variety, short vine

- 'Green Arrow' (garden pea), mid-season variety, high yields, resistant to fusarium wilt

Wit & Wisdom

If a girl finds nine peas in a pod, the next bachelor she meets will become her husband.

St. Patrick's Day is a traditional day for growing peas. Find out how to grow peas when there's still snow on the ground with [this humorous video](#).

Recipes

- [Minted Peas](#)
- [Green Peas in Cream](#)
- [Pea Pod Salad with Shrimp](#)
- [Cream of Green Pea Soup](#)

Planting Times
