



Growing Peas

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Peas Usually Do Not Make It Indoors

Peas are an entirely satisfying vegetable to grow. They are easy for the beginner or child gardener and an absolute delight to eat raw or cooked as a vegetable and they freeze well. The only concern about peas is that they tend to get eaten right off the vine and never make it into the stir fry or salad. Peas are mainly grown as shelling peas, sugar snap peas and snow peas, with vine heights ranging from 5 or 6 feet to 18 inches. All garden peas are very nutritious and contain many vitamins and minerals. Sweet pea vines and flowers are not edible.

Planting and Supports

Peas can be planted early, as soon as the ground can be worked, although you may get better germination if you wait a few days for the ground to warm up. The seeds can survive a frost but the plants cannot and germination may be poor when seeds are planted in a very cold wet soil. The plants like to be cool and thrive in the cool days of spring.

Almost all peas need some support. For a small garden with a few plants, you may be able to get by with a row of tallish twigs, brush or branches. Some catalogues list a few shelling varieties that are semi-leafless and support themselves with many tendrils. However, growing taller

plants with better fencing or trellis support will improve yields. A tepee out of wooden stakes or rebar material and some twine will work, as will string strung from either a frame or fence. Bamboo poles, chicken wire, fencing or twine lend themselves to temporary supports. The taller the plants the more peas you get. Peas are happy in full sun, but pea plants will produce well where there is lots of very bright light but where they are not in full sun the entire day. Plants will also benefit from any kind of mulch to keep the soil around the roots cool and moist (leaves and/or compost, or straw work well).

Do not add nitrogen fertilizer, but a handful or two of bone meal can be added, particularly if the soil is poor. Peas are legumes and legumes are able to put nitrogen into the soil that other plants can use. When peas are finished producing, cut the vines at ground level and leave the roots in the soil where the nitrogen stored in nodules on the roots will be released into the ground as the roots decompose.

Varieties

Snow peas and sugar snap peas both have edible pods. Snow peas are eaten when the peas are barely visible in the pod and the smaller ones are usually sweeter. Sugar snap peas can be eaten when the peas are developed in the pods and the plants will produce a rewarding number of peas over a long period. Pods of snow or snap peas that get lost and are too mature can be saved for seed or shelled. Once temperatures start reaching 70 ° F on a regular basis, plants slow down and die. Many varieties of peas have been developed over the years including tiny French Petite Pois and shelling peas that climb. Many newer types boast more heat resistance. New, shorter types of sugar snap peas or dwarf shelling peas can be grown in containers with a somewhat reduced harvest.

Peas deserve a spot in your garden and when the peas stop producing, plant some pole or bush beans in their place.

Learn about growing peas from Cornell University>

Learn more about peas from Wikipedia >