

Peas

“Peas baffled me. I could not understand why grown-ups would take things that tasted so good raw, and then put them in tins, and make them revolting.” Neil Gaiman

Peas generally come in two types:

- shelling peas (green peas or English peas) and those with
- edible pods (snow or sugar peas).

Just FYI, one of the food banks said they prefer the varieties with edible pods since they make an excellent snack food for children.



Benefits and nutritional information:

- Peas contain a high concentration of vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and phytonutrients. These provide important health benefits that range from protecting against certain cancers to protecting eyes from chronic diseases such as cataracts and macular degeneration.

Starting:

- Peas are started from seeds. Because the seeds have a hard coat it's best to soak them in water for up to 12 hours just prior to planting.
- Plant seeds 1" to 2" deep, spaced 4" or so apart.

When to plant:

- Since peas are a cool weather crop, they should be started either in early spring as soon as the soil can be worked, or late summer.
- To help your peas accomplish their job of fixing nitrogen in the soil, you may want to add a soil inoculant of the *Rhizobium leguminosarum* bacteria which helps legumes form their nitrogen fixing nodules. Packages of this inoculant are available commercially in small quantities for us home gardeners.
- Peas mature in 55 to 70 days, depending on the variety.

Thinning, training

- To avoid overcrowding, peas should be thinned accordingly. 12" apart should provide enough room for individual plants.
- Peas will need something to climb. There are a wide variety of [trellis options](#) to choose from.

Signs of over-watering, nutrient deficiency

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- Given the quality of soil in the garden beds, symptoms of nutrient deficiency will mostly be caused by either over-watering or an infestation of a fungus or bacteria.
- Over-watering will cause plants to wilt, the same as under watering. The way to tell the difference is by checking the soil.
- Diseases should appear as more localized. Brown spots on the leaves are a common symptom of a fungal disease. Other diseases may show up as shoots and/or branches die back.

Pests and pest controls

- Started early in the spring, peas avoid many of the pests that affect warm weather crops. They may suffer infestations of [cutworms](#) or [aphids](#).

Harvesting

- Harvesting peas at the right time is essential. They over mature quickly and become inedible. Once the pods start to flesh out with peas, check on them daily. Pick peas as soon as the pods have reached their maximum size. If you think the pods are ready, pick one and eat it. It should be thin-skinned, sweet, and tender.

Once the vines/bush have stopped producing peas, don't pull the plants up but just cut them off at ground level and let the roots decay in the soil. That way they leave behind more nitrogen for the next year's plants.

Other resources and articles

- Good companion plants for peas are beans, carrots, cucumbers, eggplant, peppers, radishes, tomatoes and turnips.
- Avoid planting peas near members of the onion family: onions, garlic, leeks and chives