



About Peas

Known by so many names -- garden peas, shelling peas, snap peas, sugar peas, snow peas -- not all peas are the same. Some grow plump, juicy peas in edible pods that are best enjoyed raw, while others grow miniscule sized peas in flat pods that bring out their best flavor steamed or in soups. Knowing which type of peas you would like to grow in your garden will steer your early spring dinners in very definite directions.

When to Plant

Plant your pea seeds outside 4-6 weeks before the average last frost for your area. Peas enjoy temperatures of 55-65 degrees F but are hardy down to 40 degrees F.

Where to Plant

Choose an open, weed-free site in full sun. Grow your peas in moist, fertile, well-drained soil. Peas prefer cool, damp weather but avoid working in overly wet soil as this will compact and your peas may rot. Try to dig plenty of well-rotted compost into the soil several weeks before sowing to improve soil fertility and help retain moisture.

How to Plant

Plant as soon as you can work the soil down to 2". Directly sow them in long furrows if planting up against a fence, or in a circular pattern if using tomato cages or tee-pees as a trellis. Plant the seeds 1" deep, and sprinkle them out about 3" apart.

Caring for

After your seeds have sprouted, you will thin them to the desired spacing. Cover with 1" of soil and water gently, taking care not to wash away your newly planted seeds. Erect your well-anchored support now so that it will be in place as soon as your seedlings are ready to start climbing. Keep beds moist and weed free, 2" of a good organic mulch helps with both. Direct water at roots, not leaves, to head off mildew and fusarium wilt. When your seedlings have 3-4 pairs of leaves is the time to thin your peas to their final spacing of 5-6" apart. As the plants get taller, help wayward branches find their vertical support system. At peak ripeness the outer shell will be bright green, not dull and waxy. Morning is the best time to pick, as the sugar content is highest then. Continue to pick the vines as peas ripen. Doing so will help the plants continue to flower and produce.