



How to Grow Peas

This is one vegetable every home garden should have. The peas in the pod taste sweetest right after they have been picked.

Timing

Peas prefer cool weather. Plant as early in spring as the soil can be worked, from mid-February to the end of May. After April 1, sow varieties that are listed as being enation resistant if you live in an area where aphids carry the enation virus. Sow again from July to mid-August for a fall crop. The success of a fall crop will depend on the weather. Optimal soil temperature: 10–20°C (50–70°F). Seeds should sprout in 7–14 days.

Starting

Soaking seeds is not advised for damp soils. Use a seed inoculant and sow seed 2cm (1") deep. After April 15th, sow seed 5cm (2") deep. Space seeds 2–7cm (1–3") apart in the row. Add inoculant (Legumes fix nitrogen due to the relationship that exists between legume plants and a group of soil bacteria commonly known as rhizobacteria or rhizobium. In order to ensure good nitrogen fixation by the legume, so it is necessary to inoculate the legume with the proper strains of bacteria prior to planting the seeds).

Do not thin. If the seeds fail to sprout, try to dig some up and check for rot or insect damage. The challenge with untreated pea seeds is to give them an early start but to avoid rot.

Growing

Use well-drained soil amended with finished compost. Add 2 cups of rock phosphate or bone-meal for 3m (10') of row. Plant most varieties along a trellis or fence for support as they climb.

Harvest

Pick when pods fill out and peas are bright green. Make multiple sowings or grow several varieties to extend the harvest season.

Diseases & Pests

Ascochyta blight, bacterial blight, root rot, damping off, downy and powdery mildew, fusarium wilt, and various viruses are some of the pea plant diseases that may afflict pea plants.

Ascochyta blight: A fungus that survives through the winter months in plant debris. Wind and rain also transmit spores onto healthy plants. It appears as a blackened stem, yellow foliage with brown blotches and bud drop. Both pods and seeds may be afflicted and severe infections kill off seedlings. To control Ascochyta blight, remove and destroy diseased plants as soon as symptoms appear. There are no resistant fungicides available, so preventative measures such as crop rotation with non-susceptible crops on a yearly basis helps.



Bacterial blight: Similar to the Asocochyta blight, bacterial blight is another disease in pea plants that survives winter in infected surface plant refuse. Water, either rain splash, overhead watering or pet or human activity in a wet garden, spread the bacteria afflicting pea plants, often those that are already damaged by such things as frost. At first bacterial blight looks like shiny, dark green water spots on the leaf surfaces and then these irregularly shaped spots become papery, brown to translucent with the center lighter in hue. If allowed to continue, the disease will spot all of the plant, including its pods and cause bud and young pod drop. To fight bacterial blight, plant commercially grown, disease free seeds and do not use those from other plants, even if they appear to be healthy. Remove all debris in the fall and rotate crops yearly. Also, water plants at the base of the plants and do not work around them when leaves are wet to prevent the spread of this disease in pea plants.

Root rot fungi: Makes foliage yellowed, stunted, wilted or just plain dead looking. To prevent these fungal conditions, purchase commercially grown, disease free seeds and/or those pre-treated with fungicide. Again, rotate crops and be sure to plant in well draining soil with proper spacing. Do not over water.

Downy or Powdery mildew: Are also fungi spread via spores although cool, moist conditions foster spore dispersal in downy mildew while absence of rain does so in powdery mildew. Fungicide application may be helpful as well as crop rotation, debris removal at the end of the growing season and the purchase of disease free seeds.

Fusarium wilt: Is a soil-borne fungus, which may also be found in old plant debris as well as the soil. Wilting is one of the first signs of this disease, slowly progressing to faded, yellowing foliage and stunted growth. Eventually most plants succumb to this fungal pathogen and die. Though fungicides are available that may alleviate the issue, the best way to control its spread is by preventing infection in your crops. This can be achieved through regular rotation of crops.

Aphids: Multiply rapidly and suck the sap of the plant, resulting in weak and stunted specimens. This also results in very few pods and possible disease contagion such as pea leaf roll and mosaic virus.

End-All is an organic method of pea pest control in this instance.

Companion Planting

Companions for peas: beans, carrots, celery, corn, cucumber, eggplant, parsley, peppers, potatoes, radish, spinach, strawberries and turnips.

Avoid planting peas near onions