

# Cleveland Seed Bank's

guide to growing

## \*PEAS\*

Peas are a rich source of protein, essential amino acids, complex carbohydrates, iron, calcium, and potassium.

They were first domesticated over 11,000 years ago in what is known today as Western and Central Asia. Peas made the long journey to what we now call North America with the earliest colonists. 'Pea' comes from the Anglo-Saxon word 'pise' or 'pisu.'

**Latin name:** *Pisum sativum*

**Sun:** Full

**Life cycle:** Annual

**Direct sow or transplant:** Direct sow

**Height:** 2.5-5'+ depending on variety

**Container Friendly:** Yes.



hummingbirdproject.org

## SOW



**Direct sow/transplant:** Peas prefer to be direct sown.

**Common mistakes:** Sowing both too early (leading to rot) or too late (causing less abundance). Not thinning pea plants or adding trellis support can lead to overcrowding.

**Days to germination:** ~5-20 days, depending on soil temperature.

**When:** Peas are cold-hardy, sow as soon as the soil can be worked. In NE OH, this is typically around mid-March.

**Seedling Depth:** ~ 1 inch deep.

**Spacing:** Sow seeds every 1-1.5 inches.

**Succession sowing:** After first sowing in March, peas can be sown again 4 weeks later. Sow a 3rd succession about 14 weeks before the first fall frost. For the 3rd succession, focus on compact varieties for greatest abundance.

**Companion planting:** Choose cold-hardy crops like radish, spinach or cilantro.

## GROW

**Soil:** Peas like good-draining soil with a pH between 6.2 to 6.4. Peas can fix their own nitrogen and thus can thrive in even somewhat poor soils.

**Trellising** Best to get trellis in the ground before peas germinate - they grow fast! For non-compact varieties, place a 6' tall stake every 12'. Run twine from each post on the inside and outside of the row every 10" to 'sandwich' your pea plants between the twine as they grow taller and heavier.



A great trellis system for peas.

**Containers:** Choose compact varieties. A 10+ gallon container can grow 4-5 plants around the center, with 2" between them. Fill the outer edge with cold-hardy herbs.

**Pests:** Watch out for aphids, check under the leaves for eggs!

**Diseases:** Promote good airflow around leaves to prevent both powdery mildew (appears as white, powdery mold) and pea Root Rot (lower foliage will appear dry and brown). Avoid watering leaves directly.

# HARVEST



All pea varieties are sweetest once the pea (which is inside the pod) swells - the optimal time to harvest!

*Most pea varieties need 55-70 days to harvest.*

**How to harvest:** With the help of your seed packet, check the 'days to harvest' for your pea variety. Around the projected harvest date, look closely for the inside peas to swell. This is when both the peas & pod are the sweetest for eating.

Wait too long and the pod will begin to turn from green to gold. At this stage, the pod becomes increasingly more fibrous and the peas get harder. Not exactly optimal for eating, but perfect for saving seeds.



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# SAVE

Peas self-pollinate. With little chance of cross-pollination, they're an easy choice for seed savers!



**1** Ready for harvest once plants die and pods are completely dry. Mature seedcoat should not be easily nicked by a fingernail.



**2** Collect, put plants in a bag & thresh (separate seeds by beating or stepping on them) to separate seeds from seedpods and other plant matter.



**3** Peas can be stored for up to 5 years.



**Preserving the harvest:** Both pods & peas are typically enjoyed fresh, but there are various ways to preserve them.

Blanch peas and pods before freezing to preserve flavor and texture.

Peas can also be pressure canned or pickled.

# TYPES

**Full size:** A strong trellis of at least 5' is needed to support these tall pea varieties.

**Compact:** Typically only growing ~ 3' tall, these 'dwarf' varieties don't need a strong trellis support.



Snap peas



Shell peas



Snow peas

**Snap peas:** Grown for enjoying both the sweet pea and pod - absolutely delicious!

**Shell peas:** Most eat these large peas after removing the fibrous shell. Pods can then be used in soup stock.

**Snow peas:** Both snow peas & pods are typically eaten when shoots are young and flat, but they can also be harvested once the peas inside swell and sweeten.