



# J&L's Gardening Handouts

*Tips and Suggestions for Year Round Gardening*

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## Pea Care and Descriptions



Peas are a cool-season crop, which means they grow best during cool weather, when the temperatures are below 70° F. Peas are one of the first vegetables that you can plant and harvest in spring.

There are three different types of peas available. Garden peas (sweet pea with an inedible pod), Snow peas (edible flat pod with small peas inside), and Snap peas (edible pod with full-size peas inside). They are all easy to grow, and with the proper timing, you can enjoy fresh peas out of your garden most of the spring and fall.

There are many different varieties of Peas to choose from. Which variety is the best? That is a very hard question because there is not 'One Best Variety of Pea', there are a lot of best varieties. Listed below are many of the varieties that we have available in 'Bulk Packs'. We also have these varieties, and a few other varieties, available in smaller seed packages from Lilly Miller (Ferry Morse) Seed Company, Mountain Valley Seed Company, Burpee Seed Company, and from Lake Valley Seed Company.

### Peas - Planting and Harvesting

Plant peas as early in the spring as the ground is dry, and the soil is above 40° F. For soils that stay wet, try using raised beds.

The earlier you can plant peas, the better the harvest you will get, because hot weather shortens the harvest period of peas. If you rotovate and prepare your soil in the fall, you can plant peas even earlier in the spring. Hot temperatures and water stress reduces the yield, the quality of harvest, and the flavor of your peas.

One disadvantage of planting seeds early is that they may rot if the soil is too wet and cold for quick germination. Anytime you plant seeds in cold, wet soil, be sure to dust them with a fungicide such as captan or sulfur. Captan helps prevent the seeds from rotting, and helps prevent the young seedlings from dying from the 'damping off' disease.

A blanket of snow won't hurt emerging pea plants, but several days with temperatures in the teens could. If a late frost is likely, you can cover your plants with a frost blanket, or be prepared to plant seeds again.

Fresh peas planted in early spring are usually ready for harvest by June 1, depending on temperatures. Peas grow best in temperatures below 70° F.

Plant pea seeds 1" deep. Space seeds 1" to 2" apart. After germination thin plants to 2" to 4" apart. Plant 2 rows close together (4" to 6" apart) and then space the next group of two rows 24" apart. One pound of pea seed will plant a row about 100' to 150' long.

Peas can also be grown in wide rows. Scatter seed evenly (about 4" apart) in a 24" to 30" wide row. Let plants grow together and then you can harvest from the perimeter.

Plant a crop of peas early and then plant a few more every 2 weeks until May 15. By staggering your seed planting, you can enjoy



an extended harvesting season, fresh from the garden.

You can plant another crop of peas in early-August for harvesting in the fall. Again, plant a few seeds every 2 weeks until late-August to extend your harvesting season.

Peas harvested in the fall will often have a sweeter and a better flavor than those planted late in the spring and harvested during the hot summer weather.

Bush peas require less work and ripen sooner than pole peas. However, pole peas will produce a larger, and longer harvest than bush peas.

Harvest snap and garden peas when pods are plump and full, but before the seeds mature. For dry peas wait until the pods are yellow and the seeds are dry.

Keep your peas picked regularly to encourage more flowers and pods to develop. Pick peas in the morning, after the dew has dried them. They are crispiest then. Always use two hands when you pick peas. Secure the vine with one hand and pull the peas off with your other hand.

Peas can be frozen, or kept fresh in the refrigerator for about 5 days. Place them in paper bags, then wrap them in plastic. If you missed your peas' peak period, you can still pick them, dry them, and shell them for use in soups.

Beans and peas are 'nitrogen fixing' plants. This means that these two vegetable plants can take nitrogen out of the air and 'fix it' into the soil for all plants around them to use. Bean and pea plants must have a special bacteria to help them complete the process. One of the best ways to help beans and peas to grow faster, and to produce a larger crop, is to inoculate the seeds with a 'nitrogen fixing' bacteria right when you plant them.

Both Snow peas and Snap peas have edible pods. Snow peas produce flat pods, with small seeds, that you can eat either raw or cooked. Snap peas can be eaten either as young flat pods, before the seeds start to develop, or as larger plump pods, after the peas have grown and are fat and juicy.



Snap peas should be harvested before the pods are fully mature. Pods should be full size, with small seeds, and have firm, crisp flesh when picked. Snap peas are ready to start harvesting about 5-8 days after flowering. Pick regularly as the plants will flower and mature the pods for 3-4 weeks.

Garden peas are ready for harvest about 18-21 days after flowering. Pick the pods when the seeds are plump and shell before use. Use snap peas or garden peas immediately for best quality and flavor. Refrigerate if not used immediately.

Dry peas should be harvested when the pods are fully mature and they are beginning to dry. Pull up the plants and lay in a row in the garden for 5-7 days. Once the plants are dry, remove the pods, shell out the seeds, and allow additional time for the seeds to dry further. For long term storage, keep in sealed containers in a cool dry place.



## Pea Varieties

**Early Frosty** 64 days - open pollinated. Dark green, 3.5" pods in pairs. Six to eight large peas per pod. Grows 28" tall. Excellent for this area. Easy to pick. Great fresh or frozen.

**Dwarf Grey Sugar** 66 days - heirloom. Snow Pea. Edible, stringless, flat, fleshy, light-green pods with fine sweet flavor. Vines are 2 to 2 ½ feet long, but do not need trellising. Pods 2 ½ inches long.

**Green Arrow** 70 days - heirloom. Good fresh from the garden and freezes well. Grows 28" to 30" tall. Very Disease resistant. Pods usually 4.5" long with 8 to 9 small peas per pod. Excellent choice for home gardens. Good freezing pea.

**Lincoln** 65 days - heirloom. Pods are 3.5" long with 8 to 9 small peas per pod. Will produce peas longer into the hot summer weather. Good flavor with excellent freezing qualities.

**Little Marvel** 60 days - heirloom. Dark green pods, usually 3" long with 5-6 peas per pod. Grows 18" to 24" tall. Outstanding early variety. Excellent for small gardens. Highly recommended for this area. Excellent flavor frozen, fresh, or canned. Most popular home variety.

**Mr. Big** 60 days - This All-America Selections winner is a new, superior garden pea. Its pods are bigger and easier to shell than predecessors, has up to 10 peas per pod. Excellent variety for freezing. If grown without support, vines will grow 2-3' high. With support they will climb 5-6'. Peas retain their bright color and sweetness for a long time.

**Oregon Sugar Pod** 60 to 68 days - Open pollinated. Snow Pea. Plants grow 30" tall. Edible pods are 4" long and nearly stringless. Pick pods before seeds develop for fresh eating, steamed or stir fried dishes. Heavy yielder with excellent freezing properties. Resistant to Powdery Mildew, Fusarium Wilt, and Pea Mosaic Virus.

**Progress #9** 62 days - heirloom. Short vines that produce 4.5" long pods. Six to eight peas per pod. Tender peas with delicious flavor. Resistant to Fusarium Wilt.

**Sugar Daddy** 72 days - Open



pollinated. Snap Pea has 30 inch vines that need little support and produce 1 or 2 pods that are 3 inches long. One of the first stringless snap pea and is still one of the best when cooked or frozen. Resistant to Powdery Mildew.

**Sugar Snap** 65 days - open pollinated. Snap Pea This AAS Winner grows 6' tall and requires staking. Produces more peas than bush varieties. Pods are 3" long, sweet, and crisp. Edible pod. Pick young for best flavor. At full maturity, shell and eat peas. Good for freezing but doesn't can well. Serve fresh in salads, with dip, stir fried, or steamed. Has large, plump peas.

**Sugar Sprint** 58 days - open pollinated. Snap Pea. Edible pods. Pods are 3" long and nearly stringless. Vines grow 24" tall. Very sweet and delicious edible pod even when peas have formed. For best flavor, harvest before peas begin to mature. At full maturity, shell and eat peas.

**Wando** 70 days - heirloom. Large vines are 28 to 30 inches long. Can be planted later than most varieties because of its good heat tolerance, but also pollinates well under cold conditions. Small 3 inch pods that are good fresh, canned, or frozen.

## Frequently Asked Questions

**Q. I have problems getting my peas to emerge early in the year.**

A. Peas generally germinate and emerge better when soil temperatures are above 40°F. For very early plantings, seeds can be germinated prior to planting. These establish more rapidly. As soils warm, you can plant the seedlings directly into the garden. Also, older seed or poorly stored seed may not germinate and emerge very well.

**Q. Why are the flowers falling off my plants?**

A. Plants may have been water or heat stressed just prior to, or after the flowers open. Pea flowers are very sensitive to temperatures above 80°F and if dry conditions occur, the plants will shed their flowers. Keep the soil moist and mulch later plantings to minimize these stresses.

**Q. Why do pea pods get stringy?**

A. Stringy peas are evidence of heat stress or water stress. Fibers in the pods get tougher making the pods less palatable. Also, old, over mature pods naturally get stringy with age, so harvest often when they are still young and tender. You can still shell and eat the peas without their pods.



**Try Planting Peas In Containers**

