



The Phantom Gardener

Organic from the start, sustainable for the future

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Peas

Peas are a cool-weather crop; plant seeds as soon as the garden has thawed and the soil can be worked. In regions with hot summers, pea plants begin to falter in the heat; plant a second crop in late summer for a fall harvest.

English peas, also called garden peas, have tough pods; they're "shelled" (removed from their pods) before eating. Edible-podded pea types, including snow peas and snap peas, have tender pods and can be eaten whole, pod and all.

1. Prepare. As soon as the soil has thawed and dried enough to be worked, loosen it to a depth of 8 to 10 inches using a shovel or tiller. Then rake the soil smooth, removing any large clumps and rocks.

2. Plant. Use a hoe to create a shallow furrow, then sow peas seeds about an inch deep and 4 inches apart. Cover seed with soil and press gently. Set up a trellis for vining varieties at planting time. And don't forget to add the legume inoculant to promote nitrogen fixation.

3. Grow. Apply a layer of organic mulch, such as straw, to conserve moisture and keep soil cool. Pull weeds that sprout nearby.

4. Enjoy. Harvest English peas when pods are filled out but before they begin to turn yellow. Harvest snowpeas when the pods are tender and the peas inside are still undeveloped. Harvest snap peas when the pods are plump and crisp. Picking peas every day will encourage the plants to continue producing.

Enjoy sweet English peas fresh or lightly steamed. Edible-podded pea types, including snow peas and snap peas, have tender pods and can be eaten fresh, steamed, and in stir-fries.

At a glance

Exposure:
Full sun.

Planting time:
Mid March (St. Patrick's Day is often associated with the first day to plant peas)

Planting depth:
1 inch deep

Spacing in row:
4 inches apart.

Time to harvest :
55 to 70 days, depending on variety.

Peas grow well in containers; provide vining types with a trellis or other support.

