

PEAS, PLEASE

Plant: May

Soil: Moist

Fertilizer: Dairy dressing

Sow: 5" deep

Thin: 1" apart

Pick: August



How to grow peas, please!

Peas grow well in heavy, moist soil that is not suitable for some other vegetables. However, the land for peas, as for all vegetable plants, should be drained and free from standing water. Nothing is quite so good as dairy dressing for peas, and it is worthwhile to get it if possible.

Fertilizing

When dairy dressing is at hand, be sure the ground is soft and fine; then open furrows about eight inches deep. These should be three feet apart for the Nott's Excelsior type, and

four feet for the climbing types. Into these furrows throw a liberal layer of dairy dressing to cover the bottom of the furrow. If you can spare it, put in a wheelbarrow load to twenty feet since peas are great feeders and need nourishment during the hot days of July when the crop is ripening.

Here is one case where dairy dressing may be used that is rather fresh, as peas seem to do well with dairy dressing at any stage. Stable dressing, which contains straw and horse manure, is more likely to develop heat, which will hurt the seed;

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so fresh stable dressing should not be used in the rows.

Sowing

Over the dairy dressing, draw an inch or two of earth. This should be trodden firmly into the trench, leaving it about five inches deep. The peas are then sown, fairly thick, about a quart to one hundred feet of row. The earth is again drawn back over the peas to a depth of about two inches, and made firm above them.

In case dairy dressing cannot be secured, make the ground rich with poultry droppings or commercial fertilizer. Do not place either of these in the row with the peas, for they are likely to burn the tender plants as they find their way to the surface. Scatter about two wheelbarrow loads

of poultry droppings, or ten pounds of commercial fertilizer, to each hundred feet of row, working them thoroughly into the earth before opening the furrow.

Whatever fertilizer you may use, it is a good plan after planting to sprinkle a little commercial fertilizer, or nitrate of soda, over the row above the peas. Sprinkle it on about as thick as you would put salt on mashed potato. This gets quickly to the first small root and helps the sprout along until the roots are tapping the main source of supply.

Cover peas gradually as they grow. In using dairy dressing, the furrow is opened deep enough to admit putting the manure well below the peas. Of course this deep furrow is not necessary when fertilizers are worked

into the soil. In that case, the furrow is opened to a depth of only about four or five inches. In either case, two inches of earth is drawn over the peas when first planted, and this leaves another inch or two of earth to draw about them after they have grown five or six inches high. By this method the roots are well covered with the moist earth, and when the hot days come, they keep cool and free from the effects of the hot sun, which is quick to dry the vines if the roots are not well covered and protected.

Thinning Out

When the peas are up an inch or so, it is time to thin them out. Crowding is responsible for many poor crops of peas. Thin out the dwarf peas so that

they stand about an inch apart, and the tall ones so that they stand about an inch and a half apart. Pull out the weaker sprouts first. It may take some courage to thin them out, but it pays in the end.

Protection from Birds

Blackbirds are fond of pea vines when they are young and tender. Sometimes they will nip off the sprouts and spoil a long row in one early breakfast. A white string, stretched above the row, with white rags tied here and there, will usually keep them away. Small flags, made by tying a strip of white cotton cloth to a stick will serve well also. If there are many blackbirds about, it is a wise gardener who takes this easy precaution. It is a little too late after the

birds have been there.

Caring for the Vines

The dwarf peas need no further care, except cultivation to keep the earth soft and free from weeds. The blossoms form in about four weeks, and the peas ripen quickly after that. The season for peas begins early in May, and they are picked in August along the northern belt. Because of its fondness for cool climates and moist earth, the pea is most delicious

and profitable in those states where the summer days are not extremely hot.

Picking Peas

It does not pay to pick peas before they are fairly well filled out, as they are wasted in that way. You can soon learn to tell, by a gentle pressure of the thumb near the lower end of the pod, whether the peas are large enough to pick. On the other hand, it is unwise to leave them on the vines to dry, as that will tend to check the



“If you don’t like peas, it is probably because you have not had them fresh. It is the difference between reading a great book and reading the summary on the back.”

—Lemony Snicket,
Shouldn’t You Be in School?

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growth of the peas forming at the top of the vine. In taking the pod from the vines, be careful to use both hands. Hold the vine with one hand just above the pea, to save the tender branches from being torn. Remember the new peas which are coming above those you are picking, and give them a free chance to mature.

Follow Crops

As soon as the crop of peas is harvested, pull out the vines, put away the supports you wish to save for the next season, and dig over the ground for a crop of something else.

Bush string beans, turnips, cabbage, winter beets, lettuce, and other quick growing plants may be put in the same rows. If the peas have been well enriched, two or three pounds of commercial fertilizer for each hundred feet of row will be sufficient for the second crop.

—Excerpt from *Garden Steps: A Manual for the Amateur in Vegetable Gardening*, by Ernest Cobb, 1917

“They sowed the duller vegetables first, and a pleasant feeling of righteous fatigue stole over them as they addressed themselves to the peas.”

—E.M. Forster, *Where Angels Fear to Tread*



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