



# Protect Your Peas

HIGH-PROTEIN, LOW-CALORIE, VITAMIN-RICH PEAS ARE EASY TO GROW AND DELICIOUS TO EAT.



**P**eas are easy to grow, but once they pop up they need a little protection. A little daily attention will ensure an awesome crop—and a supply of nutritious side dishes and snacks. Enjoy the fresh air and satisfaction of gardening during the day, and peruse your cookbooks for ideas at night. Next month, we'll have plenty of great recipes for you to try.

**Cover.** 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.

**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. **Tip** It may take some courage to thin them out, but it pays in the end.

**Protection from Blackbirds.** 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. **Tip** If there are many Blackbirds about, it is a wise gardener who takes this easy precaution. It is a little too late after the Blackbirds 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 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. **Tip** 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.

**Recipes.** Next month look for recipes for Soupe Aux Pois (Pea Soup), Seven Layer Salad, Lemon Orzo with Peas, Fregola with Peas and Ricotta, and Peas with Pancetta.

**Source.** "Protecting Your Peas" excerpted from *Garden Steps: A Manual for the Amateur in Vegetable Gardening*, by Ernest Cobb, 1917

peas