



HOW TO GROW PEAS

Nothing compares with the sweet taste of freshly harvested peas. Their towering stems and delicate flowers add height and beauty to any kitchen garden or growing space.

When and how to sow your seeds

Peas can be sown directly outside once the soil starts to warm up, usually from late March onwards. Sow in drills 3cm deep, about 30cm apart into a seedbed with a good, firm tilth that has been amended with good quality compost or well-rotted manure.

For an earlier start, peas can also be sown undercover from February in pots, planting out to their final spacing once the frost risk has passed.

Try doing multiple sowings from February - June to spread out your harvest.

Transplanting

If sowing indoors first, an easy method is to sow peas in a length of guttering. Simply dig a shallow trench and slide the whole row into the ground once plants are ready to transplant.

Tall varieties will need to be supported with pea sticks or a wire/netted frame.

Plant care

Keep beds weed free while the plants are getting established.

Some plants may benefit from being given a helping hand to wind onto their supports if they don't attach themselves quickly.

Water regularly, especially during dry weather.

Disease and pests

Sowing peas indoors first reduces the risk of mice or other animals leaving gaps in your rows as the plants germinate. Usually pea plants become less attractive as a food source as they mature.

Pea moth can be an unpleasant problem but the risk can be reduced by sowing seeds early (October – mid February) or later (June – July). You can also cover with horticultural fleece or fine mesh to protect the seedlings as they get established.

Harvest

Peas are usually ready to harvest from about three months after sowing. Mangetout varieties should be harvested when the peas inside are just starting to form. Other varieties like sugar snaps should be harvested when the pods are full and swollen with fully grown peas. Harvest pods from the bottom of the plants upwards as they mature.

Regular harvesting (every couple of days) will encourage the plants to produce plentiful flowers for longer harvests.

Seed saving

Peas are usually self-pollinating and will not cross with other varieties easily. It's a good idea to select some plants specifically for seed early on in the season. They should be healthy, productive and show characteristics that are true to type.

Leave the pods on the plants until they are brown and begin to rattle. During persistent wet weather pull up the whole plants and bring indoors to ripen and dry further. Once they are very dry, shell the peas and dry them further in a warm, dry place.

Our recommended varieties

- Blauswschokker is a stunning heritage pea variety with dark purple pods and bright green peas inside
- Heraut is a very vigorous, tall-growing mangetout with violet flowers and ever-so-sweet pods
- Schweiser Riesen is an old heirloom sugar snap pea from Switzerland producing huge pods up to 10cm long