



It is time to plant green peas

While gardeners may be tired of the cooler weather, green peas thrive in it. Young plants even tolerate light frosts. Because of their durability, it's a good time to get your peas in the ground. They need to be planted as early as possible in order to get a full harvest before the blazing heat of an Oklahoma summer arrives.

Although peas can be started indoors, they don't make the transition well. Disturbing the young roots can diminish yield later in the season., so your best bet is to begin the process with planting seeds outdoors.

Between mid-February and mid-March is the best time to plant peas, which is about four to five weeks prior to the last expected freeze. Before putting down the seeds, however, it's a good idea to incorporate organic material when planting. Peas prefer a fertile, sandy loam that drains well, but will tolerate most soils, except heavy clay.

When you're ready to plant, dig a shallow furrow and place the seeds in the furrow, about an inch deep and 3 inches apart. Cover the seeds with soil, but don't fill the furrow completely.

Be sure to keep the soil moist or the peas won't germinate. However, don't keep the soil too moist, either. It's best to maintain an even soil. Moisture is vital during germination and make sure the bed doesn't dry out. Once the plants are up, about one-half inch of water per week is all that is needed until the plants flower, then increase to 1 inch per week. Germinated peas adapt well to the cold, damp climate of early spring.

Because peas produce their own nitrogen, go easy on the fertilizer. Too much nitrogen can cause lush plants at the expense of pod production. A single application of a balanced fertilizer at planting may be all that's needed.

Most cultivars of pea require staking, although some are self-supporting. Stake your peas as soon as they germinate because the plants will grow quickly.

The green pea is one of the oldest cultivated vegetables in the world. The origin of the pea is somewhat obscured, but were found in excavations in Switzerland dating back to the Bronze Age and in an Egyptian tomb at Thebes. Peas were popular with the ancient Greeks and Romans. They originally were grown for their dry seeds. By the end of the 16th century, peas were being perfected in Germany, Belgium and England. Early colonists brought peas to the New World and peas became a staple in their diets.

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