

# GUIDE TO GROWING PEAS

Growing peas is fun, easy and rewarding. A cool season crop grown in spring or fall, peas are classified as **English Shelling peas**, **Sugar Snap peas** or **Snow peas**.

The hardest decision to make is choosing a variety.

If you prefer **shelling peas**, '**Dark Seeded Early Perfection**' or '**Maestro**' are relatively early, have good yields, and flavorful taste. For a tall trellis and a little more time, '**Alderman**' is amazingly sweet, maturing in 85 days.

For **snap peas** in the 4 to 6 foot range, try '**Cascadia**' or '**Super Sugar Snap**'. For a shorter earlier-maturing variety, try '**Sugar Sprint**' or '**Waverex**', a French petit pois. Finally, for **snow peas**, '**Oregon Sugar Pod II**' and '**Oregon Giant**' are great producers of crisp sweet pods.

**Growth requirements:** Peas are best grown in full sun and well drained soil that is loose and loamy, not too rich in organic matter. As a legume, the roots form an association with nitrogen-fixing bacteria in the soil, enriching the soil for themselves and for crops that are to follow.

The soil temperature for germination is between 45° F to 75° F, with seed emergence typically between 6 to 14 days.

**Step 1:** Once you have selected a pea to grow, place the seeds in between two sheets of paper or dish towels. Keep the towel moist, but not soaking wet. You can increase the yield by inoculating the pea (or beans) with nitrogen-fixing bacteria. **Inoculation** is a relatively inexpensive process that is easy to do and ensures better plant-nutrient status.

**Step 2:** Plant the seeds about 1 inch deep, 3 to 4 inches apart. Use supports for peas (even dwarf varieties) and set them up when you plant them. Start guiding the vines upward as soon as they're long enough to climb.

**Step 3:** Mulch the roots and water at ground level. Over-head watering can lead to viral and mildew problems. Make sure young plants get about 1/2 inch of water a week (1 inch in very sandy soil). When plants begin to flower, they need an inch of water per week regardless of soil type.

**Step 4:** Help ensure heavy yields by feeding with liquid seaweed or compost tea twice during the growing season.

**Step 5:** Peas are ready for picking about three weeks after they begin to flower. Harvest the peas as the pods start to swell when they are about 6 to 8 inches.

**Diseases:** Fusarium wilt causes foliage to turn brown from the ground up. Powdery and Downy mildew can occur, but is usually be controlled with proper watering. Pea enation virus causes a mosaic-type appearance in the leaves, as well as distortion of the pods and reduced yields