

# FRUITION SEEDS

guide to organically growing

# PEAS

## AT A GLANCE

**Latin Name:** *Pisum sativum*

**Sun:** Full

**Life Cycle:** Annual

**Ease of care:** Easy

**Direct sow or transplant:** Direct sow recommended

**Height:** 2.5 feet for compact varieties; 5+ feet for full-size varieties

**Container Friendly:** Yes! 10-gallon or larger containers recommended, compact varieties optimal.

**Microgreens:** Yes

**Sprouts:** Yes

## TYPES OF PEAS

*Native to the Near East and Central Asia, peas have been cultivated for more than 5,000 years with thousands of varieties now named with delectable diversity in our gardens as well as in our kitchens. Enjoy peas fresh as well as cooked! Fruition shares three types of both compact and full-size varieties:*

### ◆ Height ◆

**Compact:** Compact ('dwarf') varieties often grow close to 3 feet tall. Though they may be grown without trellising, we always recommend support to help make harvesting easier, even if it's minimal, like a few strong branches stuck 8 inches into the ground every foot.

**Full Size:** Full-sized varieties need strong trellising at least 5 feet tall to surround you with abundance. Install your trellis when seeds are sown to optimize plant health and harvest.

### ◆ Pods ◆



**Snap:** The sweetest of all peas, snap pea pods as delectable as the peas inside and are sweetest as the peas begin to swell.



**Snow:** Snow peas are delicious, pod and all! Though typically eaten when the pods are young and flat, we enjoy snow peas most once their peas inside swell and sweeten.



**Shell:** Shelling peas have sweet, fibrous pods surrounding sweet, massive peas most enjoyed when removed from their 'shell' before enjoying. Save those sweet pods for rich, sweet soup stock!



## SOW

As a child, peas and beans were the first seeds I sowed. They are large enough for fingers learning to be dexterous and they are not persnickety when it comes to being sown too shallow or too deep. Many thanks to all the people in our world sowing seeds with children! Harbingers of spring, we also sow peas for the fall, as well.

Enjoy our 40-page book *Rise & Shine: Starting Seeds with Ease* for step-by-step instructions!  
You'll find paper copies at [www.fruitionseeds.com](http://www.fruitionseeds.com) as well as our free download of the ebook.

**Common Mistakes:** **Sown too early**, peas rot rather than sprout in the cold, wet soil. **Sown too late**, peas won't flower and fruit abundantly; those pods that do form will be more fibrous and less sweet in the heat of summer. **Sown too dense and not thinned**, you'll grow lots of foliage and not many pods. **If your trellising is too short or too weak** to support your full-size peas, you can guess what might happen. **Sowing full-size rather than compact peas for fall** often means you'll harvest an abundance of delicious pea greens with few (if any) pods. **Harvesting peas too young**, they're just not as sweet!



*Peas are impressively cold-hardy and often survive even sown early in cold, snowy springs; their reddish leaf margins let you know they are resilient and undaunted!*

**Days to Germination:** 5 days 75°F soil, 20 days in 45°F soil. Peas have one of the widest germination temperature capacities of all garden seeds.

**"Priming" Peas Seeds:** To help your peas germinate faster (especially in cool soil), soak your peas for one hour the night before you sow. This jump-starts their germination enzymes, decreasing their germination time and reducing the potential for rot in cold soil.

**When:** Peas have two planting windows. The first is early spring after snow melt, as soon as the ground can be worked until about two weeks before last frost for summer harvest. Here in Zone 5, this is generally early April to mid-May. The second planting window is late summer, about two months before first frost, late July to early August here in Zone 5. For consistent fall harvests, focus on compact varieties with earlier days to maturity.

**Seed Depth:** 1 inch

**Direct Sow/Transplant:** Direct sow only

**Spacing in Row:** 1 to 1.5 inches between plants

**Spacing Between Rows:** 18 inches between rows for compact varieties, 18 to 24 inches between rows for full-size.

**Succession Sowing:** Here in Zone 5, we sow three successions of peas. Shortly after snowmelt, often in late March/early April, we sow our first peas. One month later we sow our second succession. A third succession of peas can be sown in about two months before final frost for fall harvest. In Zones 4 to 6, late July through early August is optimal. Fruiting much earlier than full-size peas, compact varieties are best for late summer plantings. Focus on compact varieties with early days to maturity for a consistent fall harvest.

**Companion Planting:** Intercrop peas with fast-growing, cool-season crops! We sow radish seeds in the row with the peas, sowing 1 seed every 6 inches so the peas have plenty of room. We also sow a row of radish as well as spinach, cilantro or mesclun mix as cut-and-come-again greens on either side of the peas, 6 inches from the peas.

**Inoculating Peas:** To increase the nitrogen in your soil for your peas as well as future crops, a light coating of nitrogen-fixing 'inoculant' will benefit your soil for many seasons to come. These beneficial bacteria will flourish in your soil for many seasons, so once you inoculate your garden, sow with confidence these beautiful symbioses will continue for years!

**The Simplest Way to Double Your Harvest:** Sow both dwarf and full-size peas on the same date, in early spring, once the snow melts. The dwarf varieties flower and fruit many weeks before the full-size varieties do, their production waning just as the full-size peas come on. You'll enjoy peas for 6 weeks straight!

**Season Extension:** Peas are impressively cold-hardy and will survive cold, snowy springs; their reddish leaf margins let you know they are resilient and undaunted! Hoops and floating row cover help them grow faster in spring and survive longer into fall, though it's challenging to cover full-size plants compared to compact varieties.



## CULTIVATE

**Soil:** Gardens with full sun, great drainage and abundant fertility grow the most abundant peas. Test your soil (enjoy our blog, *Soil Testing Made Simple*) to ensure your soil pH is between 6.2 to 6.4, which is ideal for most garden vegetables.

**Fertility Considerations:** Peas, like all beans and legumes, 'fix' their own nitrogen, collaborating with bacteria in their roots who transform atmospheric nitrogen into bio-available forms. Thus, peas require less fertility than most, though they still benefit from rich soil and foliar feeding and/or root drenching with compost tea and dilute fish emulsion, so long as the nitrogen is not in excess. With too much nitrogen, your plants will have lush foliage with few flowers and pods.

**Thinning:** Sown well, with plants 1 to 1.5 inches apart, no thinning is necessary.

**Trellising:** Securing your trellising before your peas even germinate is the dream. They grow so fast, it's often stressful for both peas and humans to play catch-up in the trellising department. Compact varieties can be grown without trellising (they effectively trellis each other!) though a scant 3-foot trellis will go a long way in increasing airflow & making harvest that much easier. Trellising for full-size peas is not optional: Towering 5+ walls of cascading fruit become heavy, making solid trellising essential. You have many options! We sink 6-foot wooden or metal stakes 6 to 8 inches deep every 12 feet within the row, sowing two rows of peas 18 to 24 inches apart. Once peas grow 6 to 10 inches high, just before they start to flop over, run a line of strong, taught twine from post to post on both the inside and outside of the row. Continue

to run these lines of twine with every new 8 to 12 inches of growth.

**Watering:** Peas are shallow-rooted and grow best with at least 1 inch per week of rain or irrigation, especially while they are fruiting. Watering roots rather than foliage dramatically helps reduce disease pressure.



*Though trellising is optional for compact varieties, trellising for full-size peas is not optional. Towering 5+ walls of cascading fruit become heavy, making solid trellising essential.*

**Weeding:** Peas are less susceptible to powdery mildew with good air circulation, so keeping weeds at bay.

**Feeding:** Peas require less fertility than most plants, though they still benefit from rich soil and foliar feeding and/or root drenching with compost tea and dilute fish emulsion, so long as the nitrogen is not in excess. With too much nitrogen, your plants will have lush foliage with few flowers and pods.

**Pests:** Aphids often thrive under the overlapping leaves of peas. Hand-squishing when you see small populations is very effective; an organic insecticidal soap like 'safer soap' is an effective spray for larger populations, just be sure to spray under the leaves, where aphids will more easily dodge your spray. Do everything you can to encourage lacewings as well as ladybugs and their alligator-like larvae to dine on them!

**Diseases:** Pea root rot (*Fusarium sp.* or *Aphanomyces euteiches*) is common, causing the foliage to turn brown and dry from the ground up. Powdery mildew is also common, causing white, powdery mold on the leaves, stems, and pods in summer. In both cases, sow resistant varieties in well-drained soil with excellent trellising promoting good airflow to prevent heartache.







## ❧ HARVEST ❧

**When to Harvest:** All pea types are sweetest when tender green seeds (peas!) enlarge in their pods. To keep peas producing more peas, harvest your peas green before they turn gold, going to seed.

## ❧ SEED SAVING ❧

**Life cycle:** Annual

**Qualities to select for:** Deliciousness, always! Though you can't save the seed of the pea that you've just eaten (ha!), you can save other seeds from that plant. You can also easily select peas for size and texture, saving seeds of plants whose pods don't turn fibrous right away. You can also select for early harvest, abundant harvest, powdery mildew resistance and pod as well as pea color.

**Self or Cross-Pollinated:** Profoundly self-pollinated, pea flowers pollinate themselves before the flower even opens! Save seeds from neighboring plants of different varieties, confident they will grow true to type. That being said, we separate our peas for seed by at least 10 feet, making separate harvests easier. This also ensuring that shelling types are distanced from snow and snap types, which occasionally do cross and shelling is the dominant, more ancestral expression of our modern-day pea.

**Wet or dry-seeded:** Dry

**When to Harvest:** Once pods turn from green to gold and seeds inside are quite hard, harvest pods on a dry day and set them in a single layer on a screen with fans in a warm place until pods are crisp and peas are completely solid.

**Seed Cleaning Notes:** Open each pod to remove your pea seeds, ideally with friends or singing along to a favorite album.

**Seed Storage & Viability:** Peas easily hold their germination 5 years and often longer, even in your kitchen cupboard! If you're hoping to store your seeds longer, enjoy our blog, *Fruition's Secrets to Seed Storage*.

## ❧ BEST OF THE BLOG ❧

7 Seeds to Resist Transplanting

8 Seeds to Direct Sow in the Cold

Ideal Varieties for Container Gardening  
& Raised Beds

10 Easy Seeds to Sow in May

6 Seeds to Sow in Early April

Sowing Autumn Abundance in August

How Long Do Seeds Last?  
*Fruition's Secrets to Storing Seeds.*



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## OUR SNAP VARIETIES:



### ORGANIC SUGAR SNAP PEA

Sweet and juicy, crisp and prolific, easy to grow and a joy to eat! Sugar Snaps is the classic and we agree: Homegrown goodness just doesn't get any better than this. Sugar Snap is a full-size, 5-foot

vine, so don't skimp on a tall, strong trellis.



well as gardens.

### ORGANIC SUGAR ANN DWARF SNAP PEA

Always the first pea we harvest each spring! We love how easy it is to trellis (or not!) the 2 foot vines of Sugar Ann. Her compact habit makes Sugar Ann perfect for containers as

## OUR SNOW VARIETIES:



### ORGANIC OREGON SUGAR POD II SNOW PEA

Becoming sweeter and sweeter as she swells, each 5 inch pod of Oregon Sugar Pod is satisfyingly juicy and succulent. Her relatively compact vines grow 3

feet tall (though sometimes more in rich soil) so be sure to trellis you Oregon Sugar Pod well, though it can be minimal compared to the needs of full-size peas.



### ORGANIC GIANT SWISS SNOW PEA

If trellising doesn't intimidate you, Giant Swiss will be your favorite snow pea. Each lime green pod is simply massive (often the length of our hands) and we love their extraordinary sweetness

balanced with tender, crisp succulence. Giant Swiss is also vigorous: "there is no trellis in the world tall enough!" exclaimed Roger B. Swain in 2015, so be prepared to trellis her 5+ foot vines well.

## OUR SHELLING VARIETIES:



### ORGANIC LAXTON'S PROGRESS #9 COMPACT SHELLING PEA

Lusciously sweet and exceedingly productive in gardens as well as containers, Laxton's only grows 15 to 20 inches tall, covered in 4

to 5 inch pods bursting with 9 peas per pod (as its name celebrates). With high resistance to Fusarium Wilt, Laxton's is impressively prolific in both spring and fall.



### ORGANIC MAXIGOLT SHELLING PEA

Our favorite shelling pea, we love Maxigolt for sheer abundance of exceptionally large pods with massively sweet peas. Maxigolt's 5+ foot vines require serious trellising and yield

massive abundance. Although Maxigolt is our final pea to mature, they are more worth the wait.