Growing Peas in the Home Garden

Growing peas in the home garden is rewarding and will provide you with continuous picking from the early spring through to summer. Fresh peas are wonderful eaten straight out of their pods so you may find not many make it to the table!

The humble garden pea has been used in cooking since ancient times having been grown for their dry seeds. They originated in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, however the peas we know today were cultivated in early modern Europe.

Peas are an important crop in the home garden as they have nitrogen fixing ability. This means they will put nitrogen back into the soil after they die creating fertilizer for future crops planted in the same location.

When Should I Plant Peas?

Peas are grown during the cooler weather. They should be planted in late fall in warmer climates but can be planted in the spring in cooler regions. They grow best in temperatures between 55°F to 64°F (13°C to 18°C).

When planting peas out in the open it is best to plant the peas in early winter to avoid the plants flowering when there is still the chance of frost. The frost can damage the flowers and there is less chance of them being pollinated.

What Soil Type Do Peas Need?

Peas can grow in a range of soil types but if your soil is very acidic add a handful of lime to the soil. Sulphur can be added to soils that are very alkaline. A Ph of 6 to 7.5 is best but they will grow outside this range. Improve your soil by adding aged manure or compost prior to planting as they like a rich soil.

Location

Peas like a sheltered position with at least half a day’s sun. Peas are a vine which will need a support structure to grab onto. This can be wire netting strung between two posts or make a tepee out of sticks with the peas planted around the outside.

Tools and Materials Needed

Shovel Aged Manure or Compost Posts and Wire or Sticks Pea Seeds Mulch Bird Netting

Instructions

First prepare the soil by adding aged manure or compost then dig in to a depth of 8 to 12 inches (20 to 30cm). Put in the posts then string the wire between. Create a flat trench 6 inches (15cm) wide in front of your support.
Make holes with your finger 2 inches (5cm) deep in a zig zag along the trench allowing 2 inches (5cm) between each hole. Place one seed in each hole then gently firm the soil down.

Water in well then keep moist until the seedlings emerge in 7 to 10 days. Mulch well. Protect seedlings from birds by placing netting over the support structure.

As the peas grow, they may need a hand to grab onto your support structure. You can aid this by tying string along one side of the plants to help keep them upright.

Water the plants regularly and fertilize with a liquid fertilizer every two weeks for the best results. You know it is time to harvest a pod by feeling the size of the peas inside.

Tip

Leave a few pods on the plant to completely dry. The dried peas will be the seeds for the next season completing the growing cycle. Put used pea pods in the compost.

Any excess peas you have can be easily frozen by blanching in boiling water for 10 seconds. Place in a bowl of ice water to stop the cooking process, let drain then freeze in freezer safe containers.