How to Grow and Care for Snap Peas

By NADIA HASSANI | Updated on 04/27/23
Reviewed by JULIE THOMPSON-ADOLF

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Snap peas are just like fan-favorite peas but with edible pods. The first snap pea, 'Sugar Snap', was bred in 1952 as a cross between a shell pea mutant and a snow pea. Don't confuse snap peas for snow peas, as there are a few key differences. Snap peas have rounded pods, they aren't thin, flat, and bendable like snow peas. The pod walls are thicker than snow peas, which makes them juicier and crisp.

Snap peas are typically planted in the spring, although in the right weather conditions, they might also be successfully planted for a fall harvest. The plants grow fairly quickly; they are in and out of your garden within about two months, so you can allocate the space for succession planting other non-legume crops.

Common Name	Snap peas, sugar snap peas
Botanical Name	*Pisum sativum* (Macrocarpon group)[1]
Family	Fabaceae
Plant Type	Annual, vegetable
Mature Size	20-72 in. vines
Sun Exposure	Full, partial
Soil Type	Loamy, moist, well-drained
Soil pH	Acidic, neutral
Hardiness Zones	3-11 (USDA)
Native Area	Hybrid, no native range

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How to Plant Snap Peas

When to Plant

Snap peas are an early spring crop. They are directly planted in the garden as soon as the soil can be worked, about four to six weeks before the average last frost date in your area. But don't wait too long to plant your peas, because they don't do well in hot weather.

In a cooler climate, you can also plant snap peas in the late summer or early fall, about eight weeks before the average first frost date in your area. For fall planting, choose a variety that matures early.

Select a Planting Site

The planting site should be sunny and have well-draining soil. Make sure to follow crop rotation and don't plant snap peas in the same spot where you grow other legumes at least during the last two years prior. If you don't have a suitable spot in your garden, you can also

Spacing, Depth, and Support

Unless instructions on the seed packet tell you otherwise, sow snap peas 1 to 1½ inches apart and about 1 inch deep, in rows 18 to 36 inches apart. Do not thin the seedlings.

Snap peas are vines of varying lengths that need trellising, although there are also dwarf varieties available. Set up the trellis before you plant, or else you risk damaging the germinating seeds or young plants.

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Snap Pea Plant Care

Light

Peas prefer full sun, which translates into at least six hours of direct sunlight. Some afternoon shade, especially in warm climates, is acceptable, but too much shade affects the flowering and taste of the

Soil

As long as there is good drainage, peas can grow in a range of soils, though they grow best in loamy soil that's rich in organic matter, with a pH that is slightly acidic to neutral (between 6.5 and 6.8).

Water

Adequate moisture is crucial when growing snap peas. Make sure that the soil never fully dries out. This is especially damaging during seed germination, and the seeds won't recover. In the absence of rain, give snap peas about an inch of water per week.

Temperature and Humidity

Snap peas are better adapted to warm weather than English peas,[1] however, they are a cool-weather crop. The earlier in the summer the peas are ready to harvest, the better. In mid-summer, the harvest tends to become sparser. In warmer zones, the peas are done by late spring.

Fertilizer

If you planted the snap peas in soil rich in organic matter, fertilization is typically not necessary.

Pollination

As with other self-pollinating vegetables, snap peas do not require insects or wind for pollination.

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Types of Snap Peas

Snap pea varieties include:

- ‘Sugar Snap’. 58 days to maturity. The vines of this All-America Gold Award winner can grow up to 6 feet in length.
- ‘Super Sugar Snap’. 61 days to maturity. This is a more disease-resistant variety with plumper and more numerous seeds than ‘Sugar Snap’.
- ‘Sugar Ann'. 51 days to maturity. This early-maturing variety has short, 20-inch vines.
- ‘Honey Snap’. 58 days to maturity. The plant produces golden yellow pods on 30-inch vines.
- ‘Royal Snap’. 58 days to maturity. This variety has purple pods, growing on 24-inch vines.

Harvesting

Depending on the variety, snap peas are ready to be harvested 58 to 70 days after the seedlings emerge. The pods should be plump and glossy and make the typical snap sound when broken in two.

texture deteriorate quickly. Pick often to keep the vines producing well.

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Growing in Pots

Because most snap peas need trellising, growing them in containers can be challenging, but it's doable. Pick a large container, at least 12 inches in diameter. The container should be heavy enough not to topple over. Unglazed clay works well. Make sure it has several drainage holes. Fill the container with fast-draining potting mix.

Some dwarf varieties, like 'Tom Thumb', are perfect for containers without the need for trellising.

As peas don't transplant well, start them in their large containers directly.

Propagating Snap Peas

save their seeds for propagation. Check your seed packets for more information. Seeds saved from hybrid plants, however, will not come true to the parent plant.

01 At the end of the season, let a few healthy pods dry on the plant.

02 Once you can hear the seeds rattle inside the pods, cut them off the vine.

03 Remove the seeds from their pods and spread them on a paper tray lined with a dish towel. Let them air dry for a few days, then store them in paper envelopes in a dry, dark location. Don't forget to mark the envelope with the date.

How to Grow Snap Peas from Seed

If you have never grown peas in your garden before, it is recommended that you dust the seeds with an inoculant, which you can buy at a garden center or online. The inoculant helps with the formation of nitrogen-producing nodules on the plant roots and improves crop production. Treat the pea seeds with the inoculant just before planting.[2]

Soaking pea seeds overnight in room-temperature water helps speed germination.

To plant the seeds:

01 Till the soil to loosen it.

02 Plant the peas 1 to 1½ inches apart and about 1 inch deep, in rows 18 to 36 inches apart. Cover with soil.

03 Water the soil evenly but gently with a nozzle or watering can. Keep the soil evenly moist in the absence of rain.

04 Pea seeds germinate at a temperature between 45 and 75 degrees F. If the temperature is below that range, germination is delayed and can take up to one month.

Snap peas are an annual vegetable whose life cycle ends with the fall frost; they cannot be overwintered.

Common Pests & Plant Diseases

Just like other pea varieties, snap peas can be affected by fungal diseases, including fusarium wilt and powdery mildew. Another common fungus is pea root rot, where the foliage turns yellow and dies back from the ground up. To prevent it, plant resistant varieties such as 'Super Sugar Snap', practice crop rotation, and make sure the soil isn't soggy.

Pests attacking peas include aphids and pea weevils. Sometimes spraying the plants with a hose can keep the populations down. If the infestation is severe, use insecticidal soap.

FAQ

Do sugar snap peas need to climb?

Snap pea vines need trellising or some other form of support to keep them off the ground. Young plants usually latch onto the trellis with their tendrils; if they don't, gently direct them toward the trellis.

What month do you plant sugar snap peas?

The time to plant peas depends on your local climate. The rule of thumb is as soon as the soil can be worked after the winter, which can range from February in warm climates to April in cold climates.

How long do snap peas take to grow?

Some snap pea varieties mature earlier than others. On average, it