



Planting and Planning: When to Pick Peas

If you planted spring peas, chances are they've started flowering and producing little peas. But when are they ready to pick? Different types will take different amounts of time to mature, and weather factors in as well. Read on to determine when your peas will be ready to harvest.

As a first step, it's always a good idea to check on your seed packet for the "days to maturity." This number indicates how many days it should take, from planting, for the peas to be ready to harvest. If you know what day you planted the peas, you should get a fairly accurate idea of when they'll be ready. However, germination times can vary depending on the weather, and weather also affects plant growth after the seeds have sprouted.

Depending on the weather, peas can produce harvestable pods for up to several weeks. They will need regular picking every few days to encourage them to continue producing. Pick the peas that are ripe and leave the smaller ones to mature for the next picking.

To pick peas, snap them from the vine right above the circle of leaves at the top of the pea. Place the peas gently in a container – if they develop white marks on the pods after picking, they've been handled too roughly.

Peas can be hard to find on the vine, since they are green like the pea plant! Try to pick thoroughly, and when you have finished a row, walk the opposite direction down the same row to find any that you missed. Overripe peas still on the vine can encourage the plant to stop production, so remove these peas when you find them and toss them in the compost pile.



These snap peas are ready to pick at Braddock Farms.

Snow Peas

These peas are meant to be harvested while the pods are still relatively flat. The entire pod is edible. You will most likely see little bumps where the peas lie inside the pods, but they will not fill out the pods. Pick when the pods are the expected length (check your seed packet or catalog). Different varieties will vary in length and shade of green. Fat peas that have turned white are overripe.

Snap Peas

Like the snow pea, this pea's whole pod is edible. However, when ripe, snap peas are completely filled out. They should look plump – like they are almost bursting at the seams. To determine which fullness is ideal for your variety, taste test various peas to see which size is the sweetest. Peas that have turned significantly white/yellow are overripe. Sometime overripe peas develop a wrinkled exterior.

Shell Peas

Shell peas have an inedible (not toxic, just tough) pod. It can be tricky to determine when shell peas are ready but not overripe, and there is slight variation between varieties. In general, when ripe, the peas should fill out the pod, without stretching it into a completely tubular shape. Test various sizes of shell peas to determine which size is ideal for harvesting for your variety. Overripe shell peas look blocky, with square edges, when shelled, and overripe peas are more starchy than sweet.