

THE YEAR-ROUND POTAGER

PEA 'SUGAR FLASH'



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Discover how to grow this scrumptious, attractive crop with *GYO's* advice

Eating freshly picked peas is a delight many gardeners look forward to and enjoy through summer and into autumn. The 'Sugar Flash' variety produces yields in around nine to 10 weeks – so you don't have long to wait before you can enjoy the sweetly-flavoured mature peas, although you can also pick the yields earlier as mangetout. The stringless pods grow to around a length of 7cm, with the plant reaching about 70cm overall. Find out the tips and knowledge needed to enjoy pea crops yourself this year with *GYO's* easy step-by-step guide.

Peas can be sown straight outdoors into the ground, or in raised beds situated in the garden. For this crop to thrive it is important to choose a warm, sunny area, and the earth needs to be well-draining and fertile – avoid cold, waterlogged soil.

Sow seeds from March to June. Create a drill with a depth of 4-5cm, then put the seeds in at a distance of around 5cm between each one. It is a tender crop, so be wary of frost if sowing earlier in the season. Use horticultural fleece where necessary to protect plants.

Cover the trench with earth before watering. As the crop develops it is important that it receives sufficient water when flowering starts. The pods need the liquid to grow and swell, so keep up the steady regime when you reach this period.

Once you have sown the seeds and watered them, remember to label the pots, too. Being organised helps keep you on track with the veg you are cultivating – you don't want to end up confused if you are growing similar crops near one another.



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As your seedlings develop and become young plants, make sure they are getting enough water (although don't overdo it!). If you want a regular supply of peas, then sow seeds around every 10 days, so there are pods to pick throughout the growing season.

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Peas are one of the crops where it is vital to provide support for them as they develop. Use bamboo canes or a trellis to stake in the ground next to them. You can also use more natural features, such as fallen twigs from nearby trees to create a decorative element.

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As the sugarsnap pea plants develop, they will naturally grow up the support, although some may need lightly tying to encourage them to do this. If you put the canes in place when the crop is young, the support is there when needed by the plant as it develops.

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Harvesting peas is a real joy as they are so versatile. You can take them when young for the pods, or leave them to develop to maturing so you can munch on the flavoursome peas. If you can see the yields swelling in the pods they are ready to be picked and enjoyed.

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Harvesting little and often will help encourage the crop to continue producing more for you to enjoy. If you leave the pods on the plant past their ideal picking stage, then the crop will become less productive. Therefore, pick pods often when peas swell.

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The pods of this 'Sugar Flash' variety reach around 7cm in length. You can use the harvested yields in many summer dishes, from salads to an accompaniment for a main meal. The peas themselves are best eaten fresh, so don't wait too long to enjoy them.

GYO'S TOP TIPS



PRIZE-WORTHY PEAS

Peas are a tender crop and prefer to be grown in warm soil. If the weather has been a little cold or your plot is slightly exposed, then you can warm up the earth before sowing the seeds. To do this, put polythene over the ground, or cloches, to help promote heat retention. You can also use horticultural fleece to protect the developing plants – a tip to remember for any early sowings of this crop next year before the weather has warmed up.

PEST & DISEASE WATCH

No matter how much you tend your crop sometimes pests and diseases will destroy your hard work. However, if you keep an eye on your plants, and take early precautions, then you can prevent infestations occurring. The good news is that 'Sugar Flash' peas actually have some disease resistance already to powdery mildew.

However, there are other problems putting your pea crops at risk. Pea moth is one such issue as these caterpillars can be found inside the pea pod itself munching away. This pest is unfortunately difficult to notice until the pod has been opened. Most prevalent now and into August, establishing fine insect-proof mesh over your crops is a fundamental way of reducing this problem, as it stops the moths being able to lay their eggs. If you wanted to grow the peas to just harvest the early mangetout crops, then pea moth is less likely to be an issue.

