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Thursday, May 1, 2025



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How to Grow Peanuts: The Complete Guide



Photo Credit: Arpho/Shutterstock

Botanical Name:	<i>Arachis hypogaea</i>
Plant Type:	Vegetable
Season:	Full Sun

FREE GUIDE!

sure:

Soil Slightly
Acidic
pH to
Neutral

Best Spring
time

Flower Yellow
Color:

Harvest 7, 8, 9,
10, 11
months

Planting, Growing, and Harvesting Peanuts

By [George and Becky Lohmiller](#)

Last Updated: July 8, 2024



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We “dig” the fresh taste of homegrown peanuts. Not only are they nutritious legumes, but peanuts also help to fix the soil! Short-season peanuts can even be grown in northern climates. Learn how to plant, grow, and harvest peanuts.

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About the Peanut Plant

People are often surprised to learn that peanuts (*Arachis hypogaea*) are not nuts at all. Actually, they are legumes related to [peas](#) and [beans](#). The peanut plant is unique because its flowers grow above ground, yet the “fruit” (peanuts) grow be-

Peanuts, which originated in South America, have a long growing season. Depending on the variety, between 100 and 140 frost-free days are required. Therefore, they tend to be grown in the southeastern U.S. (especially Georgia). Still, some peanut varieties (with shorter growing seasons) thrive as far north as southern Canada.

Peanut plants look like small bushes with yellow, pea-like flowers that self-pollinate. Once fertilized, the delicate petals fall away. Then flower stalks (“pegs”) grow longer and bend toward the earth, pushing the flower’s ovary or pistil into the soil one or two inches. While underground, the ovary at the tip of each stalk enlarges to form a peanut pod. Once all the peanut pods are mature, they are lifted out of the ground.

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- [How to Grow Fava Beans \(Broad Beans\): The Complete Guide](#)
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PLANTING

Peanuts grow in loose, deep, sandy soil.

In the spring, till the soil to a depth of 8 to 12 inches. Till in compost or organic matter, but break up any clods and ensure the soil is loose and light. According to the University of Florida, Peanuts prefer

need to add lime, or the quality of your peanuts will suffer.

When to Plant Peanuts

- Traditionally, they are planted a few weeks after the average last frost date (in April or May) when the soil is warm and moist—or when soil temperatures reach 65° to 70°F. They are often dug up anytime after the first of September.
- The trick to raising them in the North is to choose an early-maturing variety such as “Early Spanish” (100 days) and plant them on a south-facing slope, if possible. You could also get a head start to the season by sowing peanuts indoors for 5 to 8 weeks before transplanting outside.

Where to Plant Peanuts

- It’s important to select a site that receives full sun.
- Plastic row covers are recommended to protect young plants from spring frosts.

- To grow peanuts, you must start with fresh, raw, uncooked peanuts still in their shells.
- To plant outside, place the peanut seeds two inches deep. If sowing in rows, sow five shells per foot. Space the rows at least 20 inches apart.
- For those starting early inside, fill a large, four-inch-deep plastic bowl $\frac{2}{3}$ full of moist potting soil. Shell four peanuts and place them on top of the soil; then cover with one inch of soil. Plants will sprout quickly. Transplant seedlings outside after the threat of frost has passed.

GROWING

Caring for Peanut Plants

- Water is critical for peanut production. Keep the soil moist after planting to ensure uniform germination. Water at soil level, and do not get the leaves wet.
- Peanuts do not need fertilization (and can get fertilization burn). However,

seeds when planting with a bacterial inoculant found at seed stores.

- After planting, the plant will germinate in 5 to 10 days. When the plants are six inches high, carefully cultivate around them to loosen the soil so the pegs will penetrate it easily. Then, hill them like potatoes and mulch with two inches of straw or grass clippings.
- The plant will continue to grow quite slowly for the first 40 days. It should flower in 25 to 40 days.
- Then, it's critical to water the plant during the time when the pegs enter the soil (60 to 110 days) and pods develop. But stop watering 10 days to two weeks before harvest.

Types

There are several common types of peanuts.

- Virginia types are the best all-around choice. They are the “ballpark” peanuts with nice big shells and are great for snacking. Virginia types produce high yields and have excellent flavor

seeds per pod, and attractive red seed coats. Valencia types produce smaller kernels and yield less than Virginia types.

- Spanish-type peanuts are smaller and often used in peanut candies and snack packs. They have smaller kernels covered with reddish-brown skin. They also have high oil content.
- Runner types, as the name suggests, have a prostrate or running growth habit. These are the “peanut butter” peanuts, which are generally small but have excellent flavor. They contain two medium-sized seeds per pod.

If growing in Northern climates, select varieties with a time to harvest of no more than 110 days. Early varieties of Valencia and Spanish peanuts do well in places as North as [Minneapolis](#).

HARVESTING

Based on your variety’s growing season length, check for maturity about 15 days before the predicted harvest date

The first indicator is to see some yellowing of the leaves. But the best way is to dig up a plant or two with a spading fork. Break the pods open and see if they've filled the pod completely, and if the shell is thin.



It's best to harvest before the plants flop over, or your peanuts could rot in the soil.

- Take a big spading fork, loosen the soil around the plants, and gently lift them out so the pods are still attached.
- Carefully shake off the loose soil from the plants and pods. Then let the pods dry in the Sun for about a week.
- After a week or so, remove all the pods

for a few more weeks. Avoid humid areas or the peanuts could rot.

- Store the peanuts in loosely woven containers or hang them in a cold, dry area away from rodents.
- The “nut” can be enjoyed raw, roasted, or boiled!

GARDENING PRODUCTS



PESTS/DISEASES

Leaf-feeders chew on the leaves above the ground. In addition, black spots indicate a leaf spot disease. Below the ground are soil insects.

buying resistant varieties, practicing crop rotation (don't plant in the same bed as legumes from the prior year), keeping water off the leaves, and using fungicides when necessary.

WIT AND WISDOM

Did You Know: It takes about 540 peanuts to make a 12-ounce jar of peanut butter.

Whether eaten raw, roasted, or spread on bread, peanuts are an excellent source of fiber, vitamins, and minerals. They have no cholesterol and contain more protein than many meats.

Peanuts are thought to have originated in South America, where Peruvian Indians cultivated them at least 3,500 years ago. Besides valuing peanuts as food, the Peruvians considered them a status symbol. They even used them as money—which isn't surprising when you consider how many of us still think we are working for peanuts.

[ing tips for popcorn.](#)

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COOKING NOTES

Roast peanuts to perfection by baking
shelled or unshelled in a 350°F oven for

VEGETABLES

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

George and Becky Lohmiller



George and Becky Lohmiller shared their gardening knowledge and enthusiasm with Almanac readers for more than 15 years, writing Farmer's Calendar essays and gardening articles in previous editions of The Old Farmer's Almanac. [Read More from George and Becky Lohmiller](#)

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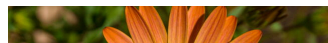
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COMMENTS

ADD A COMMENT

W G Hendricks (not verified) 11 months 1
week ago

Personally my favorite is Green Peanuts , those
that have not been dried.

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REPLY

Edward (not verified) 11 months 1
week ago

Hi would you be able to tell me where
to get seeds

REPLY

Dr Eric Aschendorf (not verified) 11 months 1
week ago

Having a house in Indiana, I have learned that
almost anything grows here! I first learned how
to grow Peanuts by feeding the birds. After the

food supply growing under the feeder. Since then, anything that grows, which we consume or animals do, finds its way into the ground, we then leave it alone & Voila, there we have it! I no longer hesitate to plant anything. My wife suggested that the next time we want a child just to plant one of the other ones!

REPLY

Rita M (not verified) 9 months 4 weeks ago

We live in northern Indiana and have had the same observation with the bird seed that falls to the ground, or that the squirrels plant. However, my husband and I got a big chuckle out of your last sentence. Please update your post if it works... haha!

REPLY

Denise Wlodyka (not verified) 11 months 1 week ago

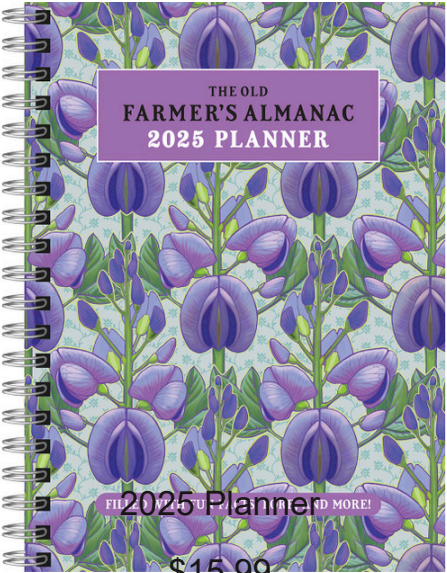
I live in Virginia peanut country (southeast) and

help), they grew peanuts for many years. I would help them with the peanut harvest, so I thoroughly enjoyed this article, as I have a special love of peanuts. I still love riding by a peanut field during harvest time and smelling that distinct smell of freshly dug peanuts laying out in the field to dry.

I volunteer at the Southampton Agriculture and Forestry Museum in Courtland, VA, and we have one of the best historical collections of peanut equipment around, and with good reason, as Benjamin Hicks, the first person to patent the gasoline-powered peanut picker, lived in our County. Check out our Facebook page, and come for a visit! First Saturday in May is Heritage Day, an event not to be missed! And if you'd like to see a really great video about how they used to harvest peanuts on peanut shocks in the field, check out one of our members, Elisha Barnes, on YouTube:

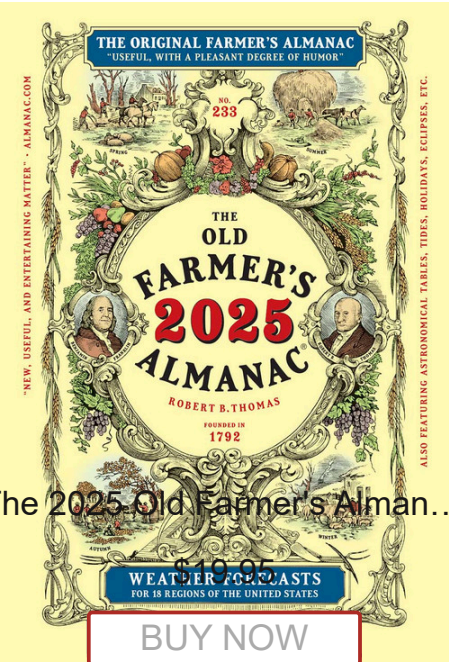
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