



Snap Peas

Scientific Name: *Pisum sativum* var. *macrocarpon*

Interesting and common names: *mangetout* (French for "eat all"), sugar snaps, sweet peas, sugar pops, sugar daddies

Plant Family: Fabaceae (formerly Leguminosae) includes beans, other peas, lentils

EarthDance Variety: 'Sugar Snap'

Other varieties for Missouri growers: 'Sugar Ann, 'Super Sugar Snap'

Days to Maturity: 60-65 days

History: Peas Porridge Hot, Peas Porridge Cold, Peas Porridge in the pot, 9 days old! Native to Middle Asia, peas are believed to be one of the first cultivated foods and were planted as early as 7000 BC. However, sugar snap peas are only just over 30 years old. Dr. Lamborn, of Gallatin Valley Seed Co., bred a tight-podded rogue pea with a snow pea hoping the thick wall of the rogue pea might counteract the twisting and buckling of the snow pea. From this first cross came a new class of edible podded peas, with plump pods, thick walls and delicious sweetness at full maturity. #892 Sugarsnap was awarded a gold medal by the AAS Committee in 1979, becoming a smash success.

Description: May grow 1-2 meters tall, green shoots, leaves. Pods are soft, tender, and edible. 2-3 inch Pods grow from white flowers.

Taste: The shoot, tendrils, flowers, and pods are all delicious & edible. Pods are sugar sweet, tender, yet crisp when eaten right off the vine.

Health benefits: All parts of the snap pea plant are very nutrient dense with vitamins A, B,C, K, folic acid, Potassium and other minerals, antioxidants and are a good source insoluble dietary fiber (reduces cholesterol).

Let's Eat! Recipes: There's nothing like eating snap peas straight from the vine! So sweet and delicious! The peas are quite versatile and can be used raw in salads, sauteed in a stir-fry, or blended to make a cold summer soup. Some are even pickled with garlic and red pepper flakes. The peas may be crushed with herbs and cheeses for truly gourmet dips. The shoots and tendrils may be used for asian style salads including seaweed or grilled with ginger-glazed carrots.

Growing Snap Peas:

Seed start date: St. Patty's Day is the traditional time to plant. Direct seed 4 to 6 weeks before average last frost or as soon as soil can be worked. Soil temperatures must be above 40° F. Usually March 15th to April 10th for zone 6b. Directly seeded at Earth Dance March 12.

Germination & Maturity: Optimal soil temperature for germination is 65-70 degrees Fahrenheit. Sprouts appear in about 7-10 days. Plants are mature in about 60-70 days.

Prepare the soil: Peas prefer a well-drained garden loam with a pH of between 6.0 and 6.5. Spread lime over acidic areas under 6.0 or apply sulfur over areas that are over 6.7.

Prepare the seed: When planting peas in an area for the first time inoculate ("introduce") the peas by sprinkling dried rhizobacteria ("root" bacteria) on the seeds or in the seedrow. This will encourage nitrogen fixation.

Spacing and Plant Depth: Sow single seeds directly in the soil about 1 inch deep and 2 inches apart in rows spaced between 18 and 24 inches apart. They will also need some method of trellising or support.

Common Pests and Diseases: Aphids- control ants, spray with insecticidal soaps. Powdery Mildew, Anthracnose (fungus), Fusarium Wilt or Root rot (fungus)- avoid working the soil when wet and watering from overhead, plant in raised beds to increased drainage. Keep basic sanitation practices.

Harvest Method: Timing the harvest is critical for top eating quality. Select bright green, tender pods 2-3 inches long as soon as they have swollen (appear round) since peas allowed to mature on the plant too long tend to convert sugars to starch. Also, peas that are too mature will cause the plant to stop producing. Harvest early and daily. Use scissors to harvest or hold vine with one hand and pick pods with the other, as the vines are brittle.

Storage tips: Wash, remove stems and blossom ends and any strings. Leave whole. Prick the bottom of the pea on its concave side and slip the string up toward the blossom end. Then with a twist at the top, the string comes free and its companion on the little legume's nether side slides off in a flash. To freeze, water blanch in boiling water for 2 to 3 minutes. Cool, drain, package, seal and freeze.

Seed Saving: Allow pods to reach full size and, ideally, pick pods after they have dried on the vines. However, if rain threatens and peas have reached full size, they can be harvested before they are dry. Peas are susceptible to mold if wetted after drying. After the pods are completely dry, they crumble easily to release the seeds. Pea seeds remain viable for 2 years if stored properly- sealed and in a cool, dry place.

References:

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