How to Plant, Grow, and Harvest Snap & Shelling Peas

When to Grow
Like lentils and chickpeas, snap and shelling peas are cool season crops that grow best when the temperature is between 50 and 65 degrees. They should be planted in spring or late fall in Georgia.

Where to Grow
Peas can be planted directly in the soil or very carefully transplanted.

Planting
Growing peas can be tricky because they prefer warm soil to germinate, but then prefer cool weather to flourish after germination. Some gardeners pre-sprout their pea seeds. You can do this by placing seeds in a damp cloth in a warm, ventilated area. They should sprout after a few days and can then be planted in the ground carefully to avoid breaking the embryonic roots and shoots.

Peas do not like their roots to be disturbed, so it is important to be very careful if transplanting seedlings. To avoid disturbing the roots, you can plant the seeds in peat or compostable pots which can then be planted directly into the ground.

If you would like to grow a legume to harvest during October Farm to School Month, we recommend selecting a bean variety rather than a pea.

Plant Care
It is best to support pea plants with a trellis. This allows more peas to grow in less space, eases harvesting later, and prevents rot and mildew by keeping the vines off the ground.

Purchase a trellis or build a simple one yourself. You can use wooden or bamboo stakes placed vertically in the ground, down the length of the row of peas. Tie a few strands of string horizontally between the stakes at various levels. The plants’ tendrils will start to cling to the trellis as they grow.

Watch carefully for aphids and address them as soon as possible. Aphids feed on plant sap and can transmit plant diseases that negatively impact pea plants. To control aphids organically, you can simply scrape them off the leaves with your fingers or spray the leaves with soapy water. You can encourage the presence of aphid eating insects, like Ladybugs, by planting flowers and avoiding pesticides.

How to Harvest
Visit your pea plants daily to make sure you harvest during the narrow window that the peas’ flavor peaks. You can start harvesting your peas as soon as the pods are filled out and have a bright green color. It is best to harvest peas in the morning.

Simply hold onto the vine with one hand and pull the pea pods off with the other hand, being careful not to damage the plant.

Store your peas in a paper or plastic bag in the fridge.

For more information, visit www.georgiaorganics.org/for-schools/octoberfarmtoschoolmonth.

For more information, and to access a video field trip on planting legumes, visit georgiaorganics.org/for-schools/makeroomforlegumes.