



University of Kentucky
College of Agriculture,
Food and Environment
Cooperative Extension Service

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March

Horticulture
Newsletter

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LEXINGTON, KY 40546



Disabilities
accommodated
with prior notification.

Upcoming Classes

Pre-registration is required to ensure adequate supplies. Call 502-543-2257 or email tlme234@uky.edu to register

March 2025

Friday, 3/7: Pruning Fruit Trees, 6pm

Learn about best practices and techniques for pruning fruit trees in the spring.

Monday, 3/17: Starting Seeds, 6pm

Learn the basics on starting seeds at home to get you prepared for the gardening season.

April 2025

Monday, 4/14: Grafting Fruit Trees, 6pm

Learn the best techniques to graft apple trees and practice with a hand on activity.

Saturday, April 26, 8am-2pm

Master Gardeners' Plant & Art Sale
Shop Local Vendors: Plants, Art, Food & Fun



Meetings

Master Gardeners' Association & Hort Council, 6pm

(1st Tuesday of each month)

- March 4th, April 1st

Beekeepers' Association & Class, 7pm

(2nd Wednesday of each month)

- March 12th, April 9th



Most of the time, the soil is starting to dry enough to prepare it for the garden. If soils are easy to work and the area is small, tillage with equipment (rototiller, tractor implements) is usually not necessary. Just lightly dig areas to be planted with a shovel or hoe.

Crops that can be planted in March include:

- Early: spinach and peas
- Middle of the month: collard plants, onion sets & seeds, radish, rhubarb, asparagus crowns, beets, kale, parsley
- End of the month: cole crops (such as cabbage, cauliflower and broccoli), potato pieces, lettuce

These are average dates for Kentucky. If you live in the western part of the state you may plant a week or so earlier; if you live in the eastern part of the state you may plant about a week later to allow the soil and air temperatures to warm a bit more. Look at the seed packets to determine the best growing temperatures for your plants.

MARCH

Week 1

Clean garden space to get ready to plant—weed and remove old plants from last year

Week 2

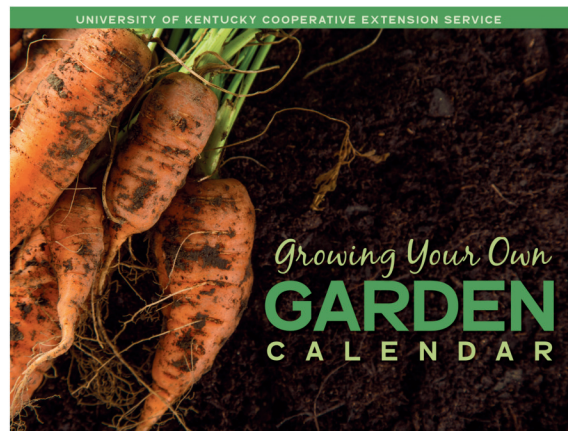
Prepare planting beds; clean containers for container gardening; turn compost

Week 3

Spread mulch; plant potatoes; turn compost

Week 4

Plant asparagus crowns; turn compost



*Calendars available!
Contact our office to
receive yours.*

 Cooperative
Extension Service

SAVE THE DATE



Bullitt County Master Gardeners'

Garden Art & Plant Sale

Saturday, April 26, 2025

8am - 2pm

This event is rain or shine! Every year, the Bullitt County Master Gardeners host numerous vendors selling a wide variety of items: vegetables, herbs, natives, flowers, bird houses, garden art, local honey, and much more! All proceeds are used by Master Gardeners for projects in the local community.

Interested in becoming a vendor?
Contact cfoxdaily@gmail.com

Bullitt County Extension Office
384 Halls Lane
Shepherdsville, KY 40165

 BCEHorticulture



For more information, contact our office at 502-543-2257





Starting a Garden: Seed Starting

By: Ken Johnson, Illinois Extension



Seed starting is a popular way to kick off the gardening season. If you've never started your seeds before, there are several advantages to doing so.

Why should you start seeds indoors?

- Better germination rates because you are providing ideal conditions.
- Less competition from other plants.
- Fewer insect and disease problems.

Starting seeds to make your own transplants can also be cheaper than going out and buying them later in the year. You also have a lot more variety to choose from when you start your own seeds compared to purchasing transplants from the store. There are hundreds of varieties compared to a handful when it comes to popular plants like tomatoes.

Fortunately, starting seeds isn't difficult. There are just a few things you need to get started: your desired seed, a container to start them in, some growing media, water, and light.

Growing Media: Select a seed starting mix, not garden soil for your growing media. Garden soil is going to have weed seeds and possibly diseases in it. Additionally, garden soil tends to be very dense and heavy, which means it won't drain as well as seed-starting or potting soil will. Seed starting mix is sterile and is usually made from milled peat moss, perlite, coconut coir, and vermiculite. This combination provides a light fine-textured media that is ideal for starting seeds.

Container: There are a variety of different options from plastic sheets of small containers (cell flats), plastic pots, peat pots, eggshells, toilet paper tubes, to egg cartons. Whatever you choose, make sure it can hold your media while allowing excess moisture to drain away (i.e., drainage holes).

Lighting: Fluorescent grow lights are often used; however, you can use regular fluorescent bulbs, a desk lamp, or even a windowsill. If you decide to start your seeds on a windowsill, make sure it has a good southern exposure, and it isn't drafty. You may still need to provide some supplemental lighting.

Seeds: Once you've selected the seeds you want to grow, look at the back of the package. It will tell you when the seeds should be sown or planted. Example: X numbers of weeks before the last frost. It may also tell you how deep the seeds need to be planted.



Use peat moss or a seed starting mix that is well draining.



Seed starting trays provide efficient space for multiple seedlings and make transplanting easier.



Supplemental lighting will help prevent "leggy" seedlings.

How to start plants from seed:

- **Prepare the growing media:** Pre-moisten your media by mixing it with enough water so it holds its shape when you grab a handful but it isn't dripping. Fill your container with the wet seed starting media. Make sure the media is settled, and there aren't large air pockets in the container.
- **Plant the seed:** Make an indentation in the media to the recommended depth. Place 2-3 seeds inside this indentation and cover with the recommended amount of media. Press the media down to make sure there is good contact with the seeds.
- **Water:** Gently mist the media with water.
- **Cover the container:** The container can then be covered with plastic to help retain moisture and warmth. Remove the plastic to spray the container if the media dries out. If uncovered, the media will need to be watered more often. Once the seeds begin to germinate, remove the plastic cover.
- **Keep them warm:** If you are starting seeds in a cool area, it may be a good idea to get a heat mat that is specifically made for starting seeds so that the seeds will properly germinate, and to prevent disease problems.

As your seedlings grow, keep your lights 3 inches above the tallest plant and provide them with 12-16 hours of light a day. It may be a good idea to get a light timer (the kind you use for Christmas tree lights), so you don't have to worry about remembering to turn lights on and off. Water media as needed, making sure it remains moist. Once the seedlings produce their first true leaves, you can water with a weak fertilizer. Before you know it, it will be time to take them outdoors and place them in the ground. Make sure to slowly harden them off before moving them outside permanently.

Good Growing Tip: By mid-to late-March, it's too late to start cool-season vegetables such as broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, and cauliflower which should be started from seed in late February and early March. But there's plenty of time to start warm-season vegetables such as tomatoes and peppers, which can be started mid-March to early April.

Want a hands-on seed starting experience? Attend our seed starting workshop on Monday, 3/17 at 6pm. Contact our office to register.



For more gardening resources, tips, and information, check out ID:128, Home Vegetable Gardening in Kentucky here:



Need your soil tested? Drop off about 2 cups of dry soil at our office to receive a free analysis report with recommendations. For more information, call 502-543-2257





Asian Asparagus Salad

1 pound fresh asparagus
1½ tablespoons low sodium soy sauce

2 teaspoons sugar or artificial sweetener
1 tablespoon olive oil

2 teaspoons sesame seeds

- 1. Snap** off and discard the root ends of the asparagus.
- 2. Wash** remaining stalks thoroughly.
- 3. Slice** stalks into 1½ inch lengths on the diagonal.
- 4. Blanch** asparagus for 1-3 minutes in boiling water, until bright green in color.
- 5. Cool** immediately

under cold water and drain.

- 6. Combine** soy sauce, sugar, olive oil, and sesame seeds in a small glass bowl. **Mix** dressing until sugar is dissolved.

- 7.** In a gallon zip-seal bag, add asparagus and dressing.

Turn bag to coat asparagus with

dressing and chill in the refrigerator for 15 minutes. **Turn** bag again and chill for an additional 15 minutes before serving.

Yield: 4, ½ cup servings.

Nutrition Analysis: 70 calories, 4.5 g fat, .5 g sat. fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 250 mg sodium, 7 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber, 3 g protein.

Buying Kentucky Proud is easy. Look for the label at your grocery store, farmers' market, or roadside stand.



Find more seasonal Ky Proud recipes cards here:



Kentucky Asparagus

SEASON: April through May.

NUTRITION FACTS: Asparagus is a good source of vitamin A and folate. One-half cup of fresh, steamed asparagus has 22 calories, 2 grams of protein, and 4 grams of carbohydrate.

SELECTION: Choose bright green stalks with tightly closed tips. The most tender stalks are apple green in color with purple-tinged tips.

STORAGE: Fresh asparagus will keep 1-2 weeks in the refrigerator. Refrigerate upright with cut ends in water or with cut ends wrapped in wet a paper towels in a plastic bag.

Source: www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov

PREPARATION: One pound of asparagus will yield 4 one-half cup servings, about 6 spears per serving. Wash asparagus thoroughly in cool, running water. Eat asparagus raw or lightly boil, steam, stir-fry, or grill. Overcooked asparagus will be mushy. Try seasoning it with herbs, butter, or Parmesan cheese.

ASPARAGUS

Kentucky Proud Project

County Extension Agents for Family and Consumer Sciences
 University of Kentucky, Nutrition and Food Science students

March 2011

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COOPERATIVE
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A Gardener's Guide to Peas

By: Diane Diffenderfer, PennState Extension

Peas (*Pisum sativum*) are a cool season crop. If you ask a gardener if she or he grows peas, the answer is generally, "yes." Because peas can germinate in cool soil, many gardeners are happy to grow peas because they can resume their gardening earlier in the spring. A more pointed question to a gardener may be the types of peas they grow. The response to this question may lead to a discussion about the somewhat confusing naming of peas. Within *Pisum sativum*, there are three types of peas: English peas, snow peas and sugar snap peas. Each of these types of peas may be known by multiple names. While a rose may still be a rose, a pea is not always a pea.

In addition to interchangeable names of *Pisum sativum*, some plants called peas, are, from a botanical perspective, not peas. Black-eyed peas are an excellent example. Black-eyed peas (*Vigna unguiculata*) are a variety of the cowpea and part of the *Legume* family. Although called a pea, it is actually a bean and a good example of confusing vegetable names. Both peas and beans are legumes and both have edible seeds and pods. According to the *Penguin Companion to Food*, bean is a "term loosely applied to any legume whose seeds or pods are eaten, not classed separately as a pea or lentil." Beans traditionally were in the genus *Phaseolus*, but now some of the species, including the black-eyed pea, are in the genus *Vigna*. Peas are in the genus *Pisum*.

Gregor Mendel's Pea Experiments

Gregor Mendel conducted a series of experiments using *Pisum sativum*. Mendel, born in 1822, grew up on a farm in Austria, studied math and science at the University of Vienna, and then became a monk. In the mid-1800s, he conducted a number of experiments using garden peas at the monastery where he lived. He selected peas for his experiments because they were easy to grow and he could grow multiple crops in one season. His research produced the Mendel Laws of Inheritance: The Law of Dominance, The Law of Segregation, and The Law of Independent Assortment. This was groundbreaking scientific work. His laws also apply to human genetics.

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Types of Peas: Shelling, Snow, and Snap Peas

Shelling peas, sugar snap peas, and snow peas are the results of breeding for specific characteristics. All may be eaten out-of-hand whilst walking through the garden! Shelling peas are also known as English peas or garden peas. As the name implies, these peas are removed from the pod before consuming fresh from the garden, cooking for dinner, or freezing for later enjoyment. In order to remove the peas, gently pull the string beginning at the stem end. The pod will open, revealing the peas inside, much as a string bean does. Shell pea pods range in length from 3 to 4 inches and are round and firm.



Snow sweet snow peas are a variety of snow pea that come in different colors and flavors, including golden, purple, and green



Snow peas are conventionally known only as "snow peas" and may be eaten with or without the string. These peas are harvested when quite young while the pod is still tender to the touch, and from 2 to 3 inches long. The pods and peas are flat. Snow peas are frequently included in Asian recipes. Snap peas are also referred to as sugar snap peas. Ideally, sugar snaps should be eaten raw, pod and all. The ideal sugar snap pea will be crispy and sweet. It may be harvested at "bite-size". If the peas stay on the vine past the bite-size stage, remove the pods then sauté or steam them to enhance the texture. Sugar snap peas are a hybrid, bred using Mendel's Laws of Inheritance.



Growing Peas

Peas may be successfully grown, keeping in mind the following cultural recommendations. It is a good idea to consult growing directions included on either the seed packet or in seed catalog for the specific pea you are growing. There may be differences in spacing, need for support, days to maturity, and succession planting. General growing instructions include the following:

1. Soil should be well-drained with a pH of between 5.8 and 7.0.
2. Seeds (without soaking) will germinate between 6 and 17 days. Soaking the seeds overnight, but not more than 24 hours, will reduce the germination time.
3. Germination temperature may range from 40° to 85°F.
4. For a spring crop, direct sow in April. A fall crop may be planted in August. Check your growing zone temperature and seed-specific instructions.
5. Plant seeds from 1½ to 3 inches apart in the row, 1 to 2 inches deep, and allow 18 to 30 inches between the rows. Consult the growing directions for the specific cultivar.
6. Keep plants turgid by supplying water at the rate of about 1 inch per week if rain is not sufficient. Applying water to the soil rather than from above may reduce the risk of disease.

For plants requiring support, stakes (metal, plastic, bamboo, or the like) should be placed in the soil, about 3 inches from the seed at the time of planting. Inserting the support while the plants are actively growing may damage the roots. In addition to providing support for the developing plants, the resulting vertical growth will help to increase the airflow around the plants. Increased airflow around the plants may help reduce the incidence of disease and/or insect damage. Peas may also be grown using the foot-by-foot, or square foot, method. Each 12-by-12-inch area can accommodate up to eight plants. Plants may be side dressed with compost when flowering begins.

Days to harvest for most peas are between 50 to 70 days. Check the growing instructions for details. For a steady supply of peas, sow new seeds every two to four weeks. When the plant turns yellow, it's time for it to go. If the plant is free of insect and/or disease pests, the plant may be cut down at ground level. Leave the roots in the ground. Peas, like other legumes, fix nitrogen from the air and store it in their roots. Leaving the roots in the ground will keep that valuable fertilizer there, making it available for the next crop. The leaves and stems may be composted, but take care not to include any part of a diseased plant in the compost. Diseased or damaged plants should be placed in the trash or burned.

Insects and Diseases

Peas are relatively free from pests. However, common insect pests may include cutworms, armyworms, leafhoppers, aphids, mites, and pea weevils. Many of these insects can be slowed by placing collars made from plastic, foil and/or cardboard around the pea seedlings. If the insect cannot reach the stem, it is less likely to harm the plant. Insects may be hand-picked from the plants and/or the plants may be treated by synthetic (Sevin) or organic pesticides, such as bacillus thuringiensis or Bt, labeled for use on peas. Be sure to read and follow label directions when treating a plant with a pesticide.



Oregon Giant

The two primary diseases found in peas are powdery mildew and damping off. To control powdery mildew on peas, apply neem oil to the foliage. However, do not apply neem oil to peas if the temperature is above 90°F. Alternatively, the foliage may be sprayed with a commercial fungicide labeled for treating powdery mildew on peas. Always follow label directions when applying any type of synthetic or organic pest control.

Damping off is caused by a fungus and may grow on seedlings growing in cold and wet soil. Once the plant shows signs and symptoms, it is generally too late. If you dig up the roots, they will likely be black. Seeds pretreated with a fungicide may reduce the likelihood of this fungus. Seed packets and seed catalog descriptions will disclose if seeds have been treated.

Suggested Pea Cultivars include:

Snow Peas

- 'Oregon Giant' – 5-inch flat pods, 30-inch vines should be trellised
- 'Snow Sweet' – large pods remain tender and sweet
- 'Oregon Sugar Pod II' – deer resistant, dwarf habit with 4 to 5-inch pods
- 'Dwarf Grey Sugar' – purple flowers, fast maturing with 2 to 3-inch pods

Sugar Snap Peas

- 'Sugar Heart' – heat tolerant, good disease resistance, 48-inch vines

Not all peas are green. There are a few yellow pea cultivars. See if you can find some and try growing them. A garden is the perfect place to experiment growing different plants, as Mendel did. Your results needn't be for science, but rather to determine which varieties you and your family enjoy the most!

MAKING A PESTO SAUCE

Transform any dish with a sauce of greens, garlic, and herbs.

Pesto is a great way to use up leafy greens. Take a few handfuls and add extra virgin olive oil, toasted nuts, garlic, and cheese. It can be made with a blender, a food processor, or using a sharp knife and a cutting board. Once it's prepared, store it in the fridge with a thin layer of olive oil on top or put it in an ice cube tray in the freezer without cheese to use later. Add pesto to soups, sauces, sandwiches, and salad dressings.



Kale Pesto

Ingredients:

1/3 cup walnuts
3 garlic cloves
2 cups kale or other greens
1 tbsp. lemon juice
1/4 cup Parmesan
4 tbsp. olive oil
2 pinches salt

Directions:

- Toast nuts in a skillet for 3 - 5 minutes.
- Add nuts and garlic to food processor and pulse until well combined.
- Add cheese, kale, lemon juice, salt to the food processor and pulse until it barely comes together.
- Slowly add the olive oil and pulse until it reaches the desired consistency.

Whip up a pesto any season!

Spring: Carrot Tops, Garlic Scapes, Swiss Chard, Turnip Greens

Summer: Basil, Sun-Dried Tomatoes

Fall: Arugula, Broccoli, Collards, Fennel Fronds, Kale, Spinach