

CULTURE OF GREEN PEAS IN THE HOME GARDEN



[Green and Hahn Ltd. photo.]

The continuity of supply of peas can be maintained either by sowing at about the same time varieties having different maturity periods or by making regular sowings of the same variety.

Apart from the wrinkled-seeded peas already mentioned, there are a number of fairly good varieties of round-seeded peas in this class that are early and very hardy. They are rarely grown in New Zealand, as they are not as sweet and in general their quality is inferior to that of the wrinkled-seeded types. Two of the best and quickest maturing are Meteor and Eight Weeks. They have not been noticed lately in New Zealand seedsmen's catalogues, but in England both are very popular for late-autumn and early-spring sowing for use as table (shelling) peas. Their earliness and extreme hardiness would justify their cultivation in autumn and early spring in the colder districts of New Zealand. They are also excellent peas for storing dry and using boiled.

Early Tall (30 to 48in. high)

The early tall type of pea is not often grown in home gardens in New Zealand. The first pods become filled in from about 65 to 80 days from sowing. The round-seeded varieties are a little earlier than the wrinkled-seeded. The wrinkled-seeded variety Gradus and a similar though slightly-better variety World Record are occasionally listed in New Zealand seedmen's catalogues, but they have never been grown much in this country. Gradus was for many years one of the most popular varieties in England, but is now largely superseded by Provost.

Of the round-seeded varieties, Alaska and Blue Prussian are worthy of mention. Alaska is rarely grown, but is a useful pea for shelling or drying, and overseas it has been one of the most popular varieties, particularly for canning, for many years. The vine is a slender and light green and bears a heavy crop of small, square-ended, well-filled pods. Blue Prussian is grown in New Zealand as a field pea. It is a very old variety and has many synonyms. It is commonly sold as a packet pea for boiling, but is rather small and is of variable hardness.

Mid-season Dwarf (12 to 36in. high)

Most of the peas in the mid-season dwarf group mature pods in about 80 to 85 days from sowing. There are few round-seeded varieties in the group, but none is grown in New Zealand and there does not appear to be much justification for growing them when there is such a number of easily-grown, good-quality, wrinkled-seeded varieties available. The most popular wrinkled-seeded variety, Lincoln (syn. Home-stead and Greenfeast), is well suited to both home and market garden production, as it is hardy, adaptable, and high yielding. The pods are borne mainly in pairs.

The mid-season dwarf peas as a class can be divided into several fairly distinct groups. For instance, Lincoln (Greenfeast) and Delicatesse (Petit Pois) form one. Both Lincoln and Delicatesse are very good for canning as well as home garden use. The peas of the Delicatesse strain, which originated in France, are small but very succulent and require less cooking than the larger kinds.

Daisy, Giant Stride, Asgrow 40, Greatcrop, and Onward form another somewhat similar and very popular group, and Stratagem and Dwarf Defiance are representatives of another similar though slightly-later group. All are useful mid-season varieties.

Mid-season Tall (36 to 72in. high)

Only wrinkled-seeded varieties comprise the mid-season tall group. Good varieties grow over 6ft. high where conditions suit them, but as they require support and shelter from boisterous weather and are less hardy, uniform, and adaptable to varying climatic conditions than the shorter-growing peas, they are not grown often.

The variety Quite Content is one of the best, though Alderman (syn. Dark Podded Telephone) is the most popular variety and is fairly typical of the group. The large pods are borne singly or in pairs beginning at the thirteenth or fourteenth node. They are produced

successionally over a fairly long period, which is usually considered an advantage in the home garden. Other varieties in the group are Duke of Albany and the VC, which is one of the largest-podded peas in cultivation.

Late Tall (42 to 48in. high)

Late tall varieties (for example, Autocrat and Ne Plus Ultra) are now rarely grown in home or commercial gardens in New Zealand. As they require up to 100 days to mature their first pods and they are not usually as high yielding as some of the earlier varieties, this is not surprising, especially in view of the importance in most home gardens of obtaining a maximum yield of good-quality produce from the available land. Ne Plus Ultra is one of the oldest varieties of peas.

Dried Peas

Because green vegetables in New Zealand are usually available in variety and it is possible in most districts to harvest good-quality green peas for all but about 3 or 4 months of the year, few home gardeners grow peas to dry and store. Good strains, however, deserve to be more generally grown in home gardens, because when they are properly cooked they can be used to provide tasty and highly-nutritious meals when green peas are not available. In general the qualities required in a dried pea are that it should be of good eating quality and have a skin that resists splitting. Good colour is also desirable.

Good varieties usually classed as field peas that could be grown more in home gardens are the marrowfat (dimpled-seeded) peas Harrison's Glory, Unica, and Imperial Blue and the smooth blue pea Mammoth Blue, which was introduced by the Agronomy Division of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research. Another variety worthy of mention is White Prolific, a variety grown as a splitting pea for soups and also bred by the Agronomy Division.