



Canadian Field Peas

Pisum sativum

Field peas are used in spring plantings as a source of organic matter and nitrogen, which improve overall soil health. Peas are a modest nitrogen-fixer on vegetable ground, but are the only choice in spring.¹ In late summer, peas can be interseeded with oats to provide ground cover over the winter.



<i>Land preparation</i>	Prepare a level seedbed free of weeds and clods. Avoid wet spots. Additional fertilizer is not typically required, especially on vegetable land.
<i>Seeding rate</i>	140 lb/ac or 120 lb/ac plus 20 lb/ac oats or 50 lb/ac plus 100 lb/ac oats plus 30 lb/ac vetch. A combination of peas, hairy vetch, and oats provides ground cover and suppresses weeds throughout the growing season. The peas use the oats as trellises. Vetch grows until frost and provides winter cover. ³
<i>Seeding date</i>	March-April. Plant as early as possible with a nurse crop (such as oats). It is possible to plant peas in late summer with oats for winter cover. Nitrogen from the peas will aid the growth of the oats, which will frost kill and give ground cover over the winter.
<i>Seed sources</i>	Local farm seed dealers. Trapper is a common field pea variety. ²
<i>Maintenance</i>	None.
<i>Control</i>	Mow and incorporate to improve organic matter. Wait 1- 2 weeks between incorporation and replanting to prevent nutrient tie-up that results in inhibition of the following crop.
<i>Tips</i>	Peas are susceptible to a wide range of root-rot organisms. Avoid a close rotation with another legume crop. An option is to harvest for haylage when the nurse crop is in the boot stage, but most of the nitrogen will be removed.

References:

- ¹Drinkwater, LE and M. Schipanski, unpublished research
²Clark, A. 2007. Managing Cover Crops Profitably, 3rd ed., Sustainable Agriculture Network. p.135.
³Sideman, E. No date. Using Green Manures, Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association. Fact Sheet #10.

Disclaimer

This fact sheet reflects the current (and past) authors' best effort to interpret a complex body of scientific research, and to translate this into practical management options. Following the guidance provided in this fact sheet does not assure compliance with any applicable law, rule, regulation, or standard, or the achievement of particular discharge levels from agricultural land.

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For more information



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