

# Growing pea shoots



Pea shoots are delicious raw or cooked and easy to grow indoors all year round in just a few days, or outdoors in the spring and summer. They are tasty in all kinds of dishes, from salads and sandwiches to stir fry and pasta. This growing activity is a great way to link the food we eat back to its roots and where and how it is grown.

### Preparation

1. Get everyone involved right from the very start! Divide up the shopping and preparation tasks between the older and younger generations.
2. Empty the peas into a container of water to soak overnight. This is really important to ensure they germinate quickly.
3. Offer more step-by-step support to those who need it. 'Raise' the ground by using tables to put the containers and bags on and provide chairs or stools for people to use if needed. To make it easier to scoop, use plastic potting trays with sides to empty the compost into prior to sowing the peas.
4. Prepare the activity area and put cloths on the tables.
  - a. Make sure there's plenty of space for everyone to sit at the table, in chairs or wheelchairs, and the surface is at the right height.
  - b. Keep a dustpan and brush handy to clean up any spilt compost. Set out equipment and materials according to group size and who can do what.
  - c. Prepare for hand washing and cleansing with a wipe or using gloves as suited to the participants.
5. Empty the peas into a container of water to soak overnight.

### Materials and Equipment

- Gloves
- Scoops and trowels
- Dustpan and brush
- Re-usable cloths for tables
- Container for growing pea shoots, 6–9cm deep. You can reuse vegetable trays from the supermarket or pots you already have, just make sure you put holes in the bottom
- Bowl or jug for soaking the peas
- Dried peas sold for cooking – these are cheaper than buying seed packets
- Peat-free compost
- Water

**Garden Organic** has useful growing cards which can be downloaded and used to start your own resource collection. You could also try different sprouting seeds, which can be downloaded from their website too.

## Session plan

1. Make everyone comfortable at the table, wearing gloves and plasters if any cuts.
2. Introduce the activity, clearly explaining what is being planted. Talk about peas and link to relevant cooking and farming activities participants may have done before.
3. Select your containers and fill with compost, leaving about 2cm below the top, and then water.
4. You are growing shoots not large plants, so you don't need much space. Sow your peas quite close together, leaving a gap about a pea's width between seeds.
5. Cover with a layer of compost about the thickness of a pea and press it gently until firm, then water the surface.
6. Leave on a windowsill with plenty of light and water as necessary, keeping the compost moist. It takes about a week to get your pea shoots coming through and then 2-3 weeks to get a decent height for harvesting.
7. Don't leave your pea shoot plants too long before cutting, otherwise the stems can taste bitter as they start to thicken. Pinch off each shoot just above the bottom leaves. They will regrow and give you a second harvest.
8. When they are finished you can compost the roots.



## Generate conversation, reminisce and explore sensory experiences

- Where are peas grown?
- Talk about how you like to eat peas – mushy, mangetout, with rice, etc.
- Questions you could ask everyone:
  - Have you ever picked peas before?
  - What's your favourite dish including peas?
  - Have you ever podded peas? Older participants may have memories of podding peas at the table, or they may remember that the peas tasted so good that they didn't even make it back from the garden!



## Make meaningful connections

- Take photos of your growing activity together and make how-to guides for family members. Try a selection of different peas like mangetout, purple peas or sugar snap peas. How are they different in look, touch, taste and feel? Which are your favourite? Can you try them raw and cooked?
- Cook up some recipes with peas and pea shoots. You could try making pea and ham soup, pea risotto, pea shoot and Parmesan salad or you could even make a pea salsa with raw garden peas!
- If you grow pea shoots at the beginning of Plant and Share you could all come back together to eat a meal together, or take some home to family members. Or if you go on to grow garden peas you could freeze them and use them during Cook and Share in the autumn.

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