NC STATE UNIVERSITY

College of Agriculture & Life Sciences
Department of Horticultural Science

Horticulture Information Leaflet 8020
Revised 1/01 -- Author Reviewed 1/01

HOME GARDEN SOUTHERN PEAS

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Southern peas originated in India in prehistoric times, were then brought to Africa, and finally were brought to America. In India, Southern peas are known by 50 common names and in the United States are called "field peas," "crowder peas," "cowpeas," and "blackeyes" but "Southern peas" is the preferred name.

Varieties — Table 1 shows the recommended varieties of Southern peas for North Carolina.

Table 1. Recommended varieties of Southern peas for North Carolina.

Variety*	Type[1]	Pod Color	Seed Color	Maturity Days	Plant Type	Disease Resistance	Comments
Mississippi Silver	SC	Silvery	Tan	70	N V	F N	Good yields, easy shelling, erect plants
Colossus	CR	Silver-green	Brown	75	S V	F N	Large seed, good flavor
Mississippi Purple*	S C	Purple	Brown	65	N V	F N	Easy shelling, bunched pods, erect, good yield
Mississippi Cream*	C	Green-white	Green-cream	–	N V	N V	High yield, hard to shell
Clemson Purple*	CR	Purple	Brown	66	N V	N V	Pod easy to shell
Pinkeye Purple Hull*	SP	Purple	Cream	80	S V	–	Small seed, good flavor
Texas Cream*	–	–	Cream	–	N V	F N	
Queen Anne*	B	–	White	68	S V	–	High yield, concentrated
Princess Anne*	B	–	White	–	S V	–	Large seed
Dixielee	NC	Green	Brown	65	S V	N	Erect pods

*Suited for home canning
[1]CR = Crowder type — seeds crowd closely in the pod; B = Blackeye — named for the black spot at seed attachment to the pod; SC = Semi-crowder; SP = Small pea; NC = Non-crowder; C = Creamer.
[2]N V = Non-vine or bush, pods usually bunched above the foliage; S V = Semi-vine, plants tend to spread to vine slightly.
[3]F = Fusarium wilt resistant; N = Nematode resistant; V = Virus resistant.

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Soils — Most soils will produce a good crop, but medium fertility with pH of 5.8 to 6.5 is desirable. High fertility produces excessive vine growth and poor yields. Inoculants of N-fixing bacteria may increase yield, especially in soils where Southern peas have not been grown. Crop rotation or fumigation is important for nematode control.

Fertilization — Test your soil for lime and fertilizer needs. Process samples/boxes through Cooperative Extension and NCDA. If you don't have a soil test, apply 3 lbs of 10-10-10 per $100ft^2$.

Apply fertilizer 7 to 10 days before planting; broadcast or in bands 3 to 4 inches deep and 2 to 3 inches from the seeds.

Seeding — Begin seeding when soil temperature reaches 60^0F at the 4-inch depth and continue until 80 days before fall frost. Seeding too early causes poor stands and you may need to replant. Bush types should be seeded 4 to 6 per ft. Vining types should be seeded 1 to 2 per ft. Plant seeds 1/2 to 1 inch deep in rows spaced 20 to 42 inches apart, depending on cultivation requirements.

Weed Control — Early weed control is important for good growth. Weeds can be controlled with shallow cultivation or by using herbicides. Consult the current *North Carolina Commercial Vegetable Recommendations* (AG-586) for current rates of all pesticides for southern peas.

Insect Control — Cowpea curculio is an insect which is a very serious pest of Southern peas. The insect looks like a boll weevil. It punctures the pod, leaving a small scar that looks like a blister on the pod and leaves a speck on the peas. The curculio is especially bad in late plantings. This insect is controlled by making 3 insecticide applications at 5-day intervals of 1/2 to 1 lb active Thiodan when pods are 1/2 inch long. Southern peas may also be attacked by aphids, stink bugs, wireworm, lesser cornstalk borer, and seed corn maggot. Consult the current *North Carolina Commercial Vegetable Recommendations* (AG-586) for current rates and related information.

Diseases — Southern peas are often infected by root rots caused by fusarium, rhizoctonia, and pythium. Downey and powdery mildew and some leaf blights also affect them.

Harvesting — Depending on variety and weather, harvest will begin 65 to 80 days after seeding and continue for 3 to 5 weeks. Begin harvest when a few pods are beginning to turn yellow and harvest only pods with well formed peas. This is the best stage for shelling and eating.