



Canadian Field Peas

*Pisum sativum*

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



*Land preparation*

Prepare a level seed bed free of weeds and clods. Avoid wet spots.  
Additional fertilizer typically not required especially on vegetable land.

*Seeding rate*

140 lbs./acre  
120 lbs./acre plus 20 lbs Oats  
Trapper is a common Field Pea variety.<sup>ii</sup>  
A combination of peas, hairy vetch and oats provide ground cover and weed suppression throughout the growing season. The peas use the oats as trellises. Vetch grows until frost and provides winter cover.<sup>iii</sup>  
Oats/ Peas/Vetch at 100/50/30

*Seeding date*

March-April, Plant as early as possible with a nurse crop such as Oats. Possibly plant in late Summer as well. Nitrogen from the peas will aid the growth of the Oats, which will frost kill and give ground cover over the winter.

*Seed sources*

Local

*Maintenance*

None

*Control*

Mow and incorporate to improve organic matter. Wait 1- 2 weeks between incorporation and replanting to prevent Nutrient tie up resulting in inhibition of the following crop.

*Tips*

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.

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<sup>i</sup> Drinkwater, LE and M. Schipanski, unpublished research

<sup>ii</sup> Clark, A. 2007. Managing Cover Crops Profitably, 3rd ed., Sustainable Agriculture Network. p.135.

<sup>iii</sup> Sideman, E. No date. Using Green Manures, Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association. Fact Sheet #10.