

APRIL 2024

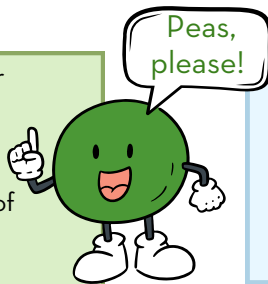
GARDENING TO DO'S



April is an exciting time for gardeners, as it marks the transition from winter dormancy to the awakening of the garden. As temperatures begin to rise and daylight hours lengthen, it's the perfect opportunity to start planting cool weather crops and prepare seedlings for outdoor transplantation!

Spring into Gardening with Cool Weather Crops

Cool weather crops are those that thrive in cooler temperatures typically directly sown in the soil in early spring and fall. These vegetables not only tolerate but actually prefer, the milder conditions of April. They include broccoli, carrots, cauliflower, kale, lettuce, peas, radishes, spinach, and turnips.



Site Selection and Soil Preparation: Choose a sunny location in your garden with well-drained soil for planting cool weather crops. Before planting, amend the soil with compost or aged manure to improve fertility and structure, ensuring optimal growing conditions for your crops.



Start Early: Begin the hardening off process about 7-10 days before your planned transplant date. Choose a sheltered outdoor location such as a porch or patio for initial exposure.

Direct Sowing: Many cool weather crops can be directly sown into the garden soil in April. Follow seed packet instructions for proper planting depth and spacing. Keep the soil consistently moist to aid germination, especially during dry periods.



Gradual Exposure: Introduce seedlings to outdoor conditions gradually, starting with a few hours of exposure each day and increasing the duration and intensity of sunlight and outdoor elements over time.

Frost Protection: While these crops can tolerate cooler temperatures, they may still be vulnerable to late frosts or freezes. Be prepared to protect them with row covers, cloches, or frost blankets if cold snaps are forecasted.



Monitor Weather Conditions: Keep a close eye on the weather forecast during the hardening off period. If temperatures are expected to drop below 45°F, bring seedlings indoors to prevent damage.



Observation and Adjustment: Pay attention to how seedlings respond to outdoor conditions. If they show signs of stress such as wilting or yellowing leaves, reduce exposure or provide additional protection as needed.

By following these tips for planting cool weather crops and hardening off seedlings, you'll set yourself up for a successful and bountiful gardening season in April and beyond. Happy gardening!

For more information on our Seed Library, please visit rtdl.org/seed-library



Beyond the Pod:

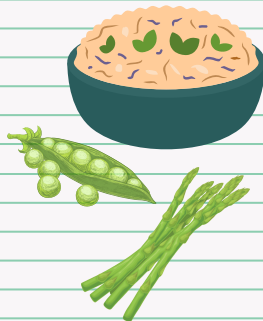
Creative and Delicious Reci“peas”

Unleash the pea potential in your garden! Peas are a delightful surprise for both new and experienced gardeners. Packed with vitamins and minerals, they're a fantastic way to boost your homegrown harvest. Plus, they're incredibly easy to grow from seed, even for beginners! Visit our Seed Library and pick up a free pea seed packet to get started on your delicious and nutritious journey.

Spring Pea and Asparagus Risotto

Ingredients

1 bunch asparagus (about 3/4 pound) chopped to 1-inch pieces
1 c shelled fresh peas
1 T olive oil
4-5 c broth (chicken or vegetable)
3-4 T unsalted butter divided
1 shallot minced
2 garlic cloves minced
1 c arborio rice
1/2 c white wine
2 teaspoon lemon juice
1/2 c parmesan more for topping
Salt and pepper to taste
Lemon zest as desired



Instructions

Prep (10 min):

Preheat oven to 425°F (220°C). Toss asparagus with oil, salt, pepper. Roast 15 min (tender-crisp). While roasting, blanch peas (boil 1-2 min, ice bath, drain). Warm broth.

Risotto (20 min):

Melt butter in a skillet, sauté shallot 3 min. Add garlic, cook 1 min. Stir in rice (2 min), toast. Deglaze with wine (cook until absorbed). Gradually add warm broth (1 ladle at a time), stirring constantly and letting each ladle absorb before adding more. Cook 20 min (rice al dente). Stir in final broth, remaining butter, parmesan, lemon juice (creamy). Fold in asparagus and peas (heated through). Season with salt/pepper (optional).

Serve:

Enjoy immediately with extra parmesan!

Spring Pea and Ricotta Crostini

Ingredients

1 Baguette thinly sliced	1 tablespoon of lemon juice
1 cup shelled fresh peas	Olive oil
2 tablespoons fresh mint	Salt and pepper
1 clove of garlic- minced	8 oz. ricotta
1/4 cup of grated parmesan	Red pepper flakes

Instructions

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees F. Brush the baguette slices with olive oil and toast for 5 or 6 minutes until golden brown and crispy.

Bring a medium pot of water to a boil. Blanch the peas until they are bright green and tender. Remove the peas to a bowl of ice water to stop the cooking process. Drain the peas and set them aside

Pulse the peas, mint, garlic, Parmesan, and lemon juice in a mini food processor or blender until combined, but still chunky. With the machine running, add the olive oil in a steady stream until it reaches the desired consistency. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Add some red pepper flakes if you like some heat.

Spread the baguette with a layer of ricotta (about a tablespoon) Add a layer of the pea mixture (about a teaspoon) Garnish with more mint if desired and serve



HIP-PEAS