



SOUTHERN PEAS

Douglas C. Sanders, Extension Horticultural Specialist

Southern peas originated in India in prehistoric times and moved to Africa, then 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.

Variety	Type ⁽¹⁾	Pod Color	Seed Color	Maturity/ Days	Plant Type ⁽²⁾	Disease ⁽³⁾ Resist.	Comments ⁽⁴⁾
MS Silver	SC	Silvery	Tan	70	NV	FN	GU, ES, EP
Colossus	C	Silver -green	Brown	75	SV	FN	LS, flavor
MS Purple	SC	Purple	Brown	65	NV	FN	ES, GY, EP bunched pods
Pinkey Purple Hull	SP	Purple	Cream	80	SV	—	SS, flavor
Texas Cream 12*	—	—	Cream	—	NV	FN	—
Queen Anne*	B	—	White	68	SV	—	GY, EP
Princess Anne*	B	—	White	—	SV	—	concentrated
Dixie Lee*	NC	Green	Brown	65	SV	N	Erect plants

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*Suited for commercial production for processing

¹CR = 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.

²NV = Non-vine or bush, pods usually bunched above the foliage; SV = Semi-vine, plants tend to spread to vine slightly.

³F = Fusarium wilt resistant; N = Nematode resistant.

⁴GY = Good yield; ES = Easy shelling; EP = Erect plant; LS = Large seed; SS = Small seed.



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. If you don't have a soil test see the table below:

Soil Fertility	Lb/A	Coastal	
		Plain	Piedmont
Low	400	4-24-24	4-24-24
Medium	200	5-15-30	4-24-24
High	None	None	None

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 60F 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 or 30 to 50 lb of seed per acre for large seed. Vining types should be seeded 1 to 2 per ft or 20 to 30 lb of seed per acre. Plant seeds ³/₄ to 1 ¹/₄ 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 *N.C. Agricultural Chemicals Manual* 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 later 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, wire worm, lesser cornstalk borer, and seed corn maggot. Consult the current *N.C. Agricultural Chemicals Manual* for current rates.

Diseases – Southern peas are often infected by root rots caused by Fusarium, Rhizoctonia, and Phythium. Downy 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.

Southern peas are sold in bu hampers or mesh bags. Do not use burlap sacks because they are not properly ventilated. Southern peas weigh 30 lb per bu. One person can harvest 12 to 20 bu per day if yields are average. Average production is 125 to 300 bu per acre.