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Peas Please

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Peas please! No child should miss the experience of eating green peas, fresh from the just-picked pod. It?s one of life?s magical moments. My best memories are of the first peas of the season. I must say the magic palled a little after night after night sitting around the farm?s kitchen table, shelling buckets of peas for freezing. My parents believed in growing in bulk ? after all, you could never be certain that famine and starvation were not just around the corner! The big chest freezer ? the first in our farming neighbourhood ? groaned under the weight of them. We children groaned our way through winter meal after winter meal served with pre-frozen peas. As an adult, I grow peas but I NEVER freeze them. I eat them fresh and sweet ? raw in a salad, lightly boiled with a sprig of mint with lamb, or tossed into a risotto or paella. Growing peas is easy. Make a shallow furrow in well dug soil that has had plenty of compost in the previous year. Place the seed (use real seed, not peas from the pack in your freezer) about 5cm apart along the furrow. Rake soil over the seed. Then firm the surface. What?s not so easy is protecting your germinating peas from slugs, snails, mice and birds. Play it safe - cover the ground after you?ve sown. Wire netting is ideal but even newspaper will keep birds at bay until the pea shoots appear. Set out bait for slugs and snails. Organic or inorganic. Or, if you want to really play it safe, sow your peas in a seed tray and transplant seedlings into the ground when they are big enough to fend for themselves. Even then, it may pay to put out some slug and snail bait. Peas love to climb. Twiggy sticks pushed into the ground will stop them from sprawling all over the garden. Or, provide them with a wire netting fence to climb. Happy growing!

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