

Sweet Peas and Basil from Seed

Sweet peas thrive in cool temperatures, so it's important to get them blooming early before summer heat knocks them out. You can plant them outdoors as soon as the soil can be worked in spring. Gardeners in the Northwest often plant inside in March and plant in the ground in early May after hardening them off.

Whether you're planting indoors or out, it's a good idea to break or soften the hard seed coat before planting. You can soak the seeds overnight in water or nick the brown coating with a nail clippers or a piece of sandpaper. If you start your seeds indoors, you can use biodegradable pots, such as homemade [Paper Pots](#) or peat pots. The seedlings resent root disturbance, though if you're careful you can use plastic pots successfully.

Basil seeds can be sown inside in March. Find a sunny windowsill for your pots, and keep them watered with a plate or dish under the pots to catch water.

Hardening off plants you have grown inside from seeds takes 5-6 days. Put them outside in the daytime and bring them in at night. Then plant them outside. Basil can go outside in May, but be sure to find a nice warm spot for it in your garden.

--Barbara Chase