DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE
RESEARCH & EXTENSION
University of Arkansas System

Agriculture and Natural Resources

FSA6093

Home Gardening Series

Peanuts

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Environment

Light – sunny
Soil – deep, sandy loam
Fertility – medium
pH – 5.7 to 7.0
Temperature – warm
Moisture – average

Culture

Planting – direct seed, warm soil
Spacing – 4 x 24 inches, thin
Hardiness – tender annual
Fertilizer – medium

Peanuts – *Arachis hypogaea*

Peanuts (also known as goober peas and earth nuts) are warm-season annuals that resemble clover in appearance. Peanuts are natives of South America; however, they were carried early to the Old World tropics by Portuguese explorers and are now grown extensively in India, East and West Africa, China and Indonesia. They were brought to Virginia from Africa by the slaves and are now one of the most important crops of the South.

There are four main classes of peanuts. Valencia is the best type for home gardens from Texas to Canada. They mature quickly and can be ready to harvest in 95 days. Spanish peanuts are the kind you find in candy and as roasted peanuts. They take another 20 days to mature but grow well in Arkansas. The last two types are Runner and Virginia peanuts. The Runner peanuts are most commonly used for peanut butter, and the Virginia peanuts are the high-quality, large roasted nuts. Both of these types require about 130 to 150 days to mature and do not tolerate drought or cool conditions.

Cultural Practices

Peanuts develop best in loose, sandy soil and require a minimum of 120 frost-free days to reach maturity. Peanuts grow best in a soil that has good calcium availability in the upper 6 inches. Gypsum can be added to the soil when soil pH does not need to be adjusted. Since peanuts fix nitrogen with the aid of rhizobium bacteria, high levels of nitrogen fertilizer are not needed. If the site has never had peanut production, an inoculum application may be needed at the time of planting.

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Cultivars -

Crop	Cultivar	Days to Maturity	Seed Per 100 Feet of Row	Remarks
Peanuts	Spanish	110	1 pound	Small kernels, two to three kernels per pod. Compact, upright growth habit. Rapid growing and heavy bearing.
	Early Spanish	105	1 pound	Small kernels, two to three kernels per pod. Upright, compact and heavy yielding plants.
	Improved Spanish	115	1 pound	Early bearing bunch type. Large kernels, one or two kernels per pod. Heavier yielding than Spanish.
	Improved Virginia	135	1 pound	Large podded, one or two kernels per pod. Bush type, 18 inches tall, hardy.
	Virginia Jumbo	135	1 pound	Strain of the Virginia type. Large kernels, one or two kernels per pod. Runner type; vines grow 18 inches tall and spread 3 1/2 feet.
	Valencia Tennessee Red	110	1 pound	Long pods, two to five kernels per pod. Easy to grow. Heavy yielder.
	Carolina Black	110	1 pound	A rare heirloom, sweet-tasting, black-skinned peanuts that are slightly larger than Spanish, two kernels per pod.
	Jumbo (Mammoth Jumbo)	135	1 pound	Large-podded, one or two kernels per pod, shells easily. Easy to grow and harvest.

Plant individual seeds (or the entire husk containing the seeds) 1 to 1 1/2 inches deep and 10 to 12 inches apart. Allow 36 inches between rows. The seedlings emerge with three clover-like leaflets that rapidly grow into plants 18 to 20 inches high.

Keep the soil loose and hilled to the row of plants. After the bright yellow flowers are pollinated, the flowering shoots elongate and send a “peg” into the soil. These pegs, which form the peanuts, readily enter loose soil (they do not have to be covered by hand), but they will not penetrate hard baked soil. A light covering (1 to 2 inches) of loose, organic mulch material around the plants will help keep the soil loose and the peanuts near the surface of the ground. Do not disturb the soil after the flower pegs have buried themselves. Usually 50 to 75 peanuts are formed in each hill. Hand pull weeds in the row.

Only about 15 percent of the flowers will peg into the soil and develop peanuts. Don’t be alarmed if you see a large number of flowers on the plant that do not form peanuts. Keeping the soil around the plant loose will ensure maximum pod production.

Dig the plants after they have matured (begun to turn yellow) in the fall. Harvest in early to mid-September. The soil should be dry so that it can be shaken off the peanuts. Cure the peanuts by stacking the plants in an open shelter or by hanging them in a warm, dry shed or garage for a week. After the plants have dried, shake off any remaining soil and pull the peanuts from the vines. Continue to air-dry the peanuts for another one to two weeks.

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