

# Austrian winter pea

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*Pisum sativus* (Leguminosae)

## Fast facts:

Acres in Washington: 1200 acres in 2007
Number of growers: less than 10
Per acre value: \$700
Value of production in Washington: \$840,000

## Description

### Of crop:

The Austrian winter pea is a low growing vine annual legume. It is sometimes called a black pea or field pea. It has a hollow, slender, succulent stem that is 2-4 ft. long. The Austrian winter pea pods have 3-5 round dark seeds that are commonly mottled with purple or brown spots. The foliage is pale green and the flowers are purple, pink or reddish. The pea seed must be inoculated with the *Rhizobium* bacteria prior to planting. This helps produce nodules for nitrogen fixation. Austrian winter pea is generally a fall seeded cover crop that can be used for grazing, hay or as a green manure. The peas are seeded in September to October. However, if exposed to long periods of sub-zero weather without snow cover, there may be winterkill of the stand. It can also be grown as a spring seeded summer annual sown as early as possible in the spring. Austrian winter pea has good nitrogen fixing capabilities and fits into a rotation from wheat to sorghum. In Washington, Austrian winter peas are grown on small acreage for cattle and sheep forage. It is also grown for seed. Approximately 90 percent is grown within a ninety- mile radius of Pullman in the Palouse region. There is a small market for Austrian winter peas as an ingredient in birdseed.

## Key pests:

The main pest problems are broadleaf weeds. The winter pea grows so much biomass that weeds are smothered but in early spring when the plants are small, weed control is vital. These include wild oats, mayweed, pigweed, lambsquarter, mustard, China mustard and downy brome. Insects can be a problem but as it is used for forage and not for human consumption it is generally not an issue. The pea aphid is the main pest problem. They can vector viruses such as the pea enation virus. Another insect pest is the pea weevil, which enters the pod and feeds on the seed. Since Austrian winter pea has an intense growth that creates a strong canopy it often creates a moist condition that promotes diseases like fusarium wilt, pythium and mycosphaerella. They tend to thrive in humid, wet weather.

## Key pesticides:

Weed pests are controlled with Pursuit, Sencor, Treflan, and Sonalan. Dimethoate's are used for aphid control. The pea weevil is controlled with

Imidan. Fusarium wilt is best controlled through sanitation practices. Pythium is controlled with fungicidal seed treatments of Alliance or Apron. Growers should use resistant varieties when possible.

**Critical pest**

**Control issues:**

Since the Austrian winter pea produces a purple flower that is similar to the flower of smooth peas, growers should be aware of cross-pollination issues. Many growers were advised not to plant smooth peas for 3 years after Austrian winter peas. Currently there is work underway to create a food grade Austrian winter pea.

**Expert contacts:**

Todd Schultz  
USDA Dry Pea & Lentil Council  
2780 W Pullman Rd.  
Moscow, ID 83843  
208 882 3023

Joe Yenish  
Department of Crop and Soil Sciences  
169 Johnson Hall  
Pullman, WA 99164  
509 335 2961

Gary Ferrel  
Blue Mountain Seed  
203 East Oak  
Walla Walla, WA 3366  
509 529 3366

Sources: USDA Dry Pea & Lentil Council

**Location**

**Of production:** Whitman, Spokane, Garfield, Walla Walla and Asotin counties

[http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics\\_by\\_State/Washington/Historic\\_Data/specialty/honey.pdf](http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Washington/Historic_Data/specialty/honey.pdf)



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## Austrian Winter Pea Production in Washington



Area of Austrian Winter Pea Production