

Black-eyed pea

Vigna sinensis (Leguminosae)

Fast facts:

Acres in Washington: less than 20 Number of growers: less than 10
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Description

Of crop:

The black-eyed pea is a subspecies of the cowpea and is one of the most ancient crops known to man. This so-called pea is more closely related to the beans than to peas. It can be cultivated as a seed, a vegetable for leafy greens, green pods, fresh shelled green peas and shelled dried peas, a cover crop and for fodder. It is an important food and stock-feed crop in the Southern states. The plant needs warm weather and is injured by frost. It is bushy and twining but not climbing. The bushy plants produce long, slender pods 3-6 inches long that contain approximately 6 to 15 seeds per pod. The peas are small only 1/6 inch to 1/4 inch. For food, they are harvested at the green-shell state, while pods are still green. The seeds are white with a black "eye" around the hilum. Seeds should be inoculated with the appropriate *Rhizobium* species for optimum nitrogen fixation. The quality of the seed is important so care in harvest and post harvest handling is important to avoid cracked or split seeds. For feedstock, the whole plant is harvested as hay. Most black-eyed peas in Washington are sold at farmers markets and are used in Southern-style cooking. Black-eyed peas are an excellent source of calcium. Planting and production practices are similar to those for dry beans, however, peas are harvested when green, beginning the first of July. Harvest is by hand, every day for four to five weeks.

Key pests:

The main disease pest in black-eyed peas is the curly top virus, which is vectored by beet leafhoppers. The insect pests are the cabbage looper and aphids. Weeds are not a major issue.

Key pesticides:

For cabbage loopers growers can use Thiodan. For aphids they can use Diazinon. Growers should hose off leafhoppers and spray with carbaryl. Putting transplants on plastic mulch helps control weeds.

Critical pest

Control issues:

Growers can pick resistant varieties and use disease-free seed. If plants become infected the affected plants and debris should be removed. Growers should follow sanitation practices when possible.

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Location of production: Eastern Washington: Franklin and Grant counties.

