

## **Gardener's Notebook**

### **Plant Peas on St. Pat's Day?**

**By Zelpha Boyd**  
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E-mail from an Ennis friend: can I plant peas on St. Patrick's Day? Yes, I replied, if you can find enough bare ground! I was half joking and half not believing that it would be a good idea.

Apparently she had read somewhere that peas could be planted on St. Pat's Day. My guess is that that suggestion came from somewhere in a much warmer climate—perhaps southern Colorado?

Here in my back yard in Bozeman I still have about two feet of the white and crusty stuff covering my garden. It's just now beginning to melt and will be at least another month until I have any bare ground at all!

But, yes, if there's bare ground—and it's dry enough—peas could be planted on St. Pat's. Peas like the cool weather and will begin to grow as soon as the ground warms up a bit. So go ahead and give it a try. Usually the time to plant peas here is on Good Friday, which makes it about a month from now. Rest assured that those seeds won't sprout and grow until enough warmth arrives anyway—no need to try and hurry the season. A good rule to follow about spring planting: wait until the first green leaves of weeds appear. Then you'll know that the growing season has arrived.

Other seeds that could be planted at the same time would be spinach, some greens and onions. Some folks encourage these plants go to seed in the fall and thereby self seed. When the weather warms enough in spring, there's a crop of greens very early, before the ground dries enough for

traditional planting. Self-seeding annual flowers—bachelor buttons, annual poppies, alyssum, to name a few—will also come up earlier than you may want to plant them. Rushing the season may lead to disappointments, so just find other projects until the weather warms a bit more.

As for me, with the snow piled high in the gardening areas, I'll be planting peas and spinach in my non-heated greenhouse about the first of March. Folks who have cold frames will also be getting their seeds in the ground at this time.

As for other projects, how about those house plants that need attention? Use your gardening energies tending them. Divide, transplant, rearrange, start cuttings—there are all sorts of 'gardening' activities that can get your hands in the soil. Planning the outside garden, browsing the catalogs, ordering seeds and yes, even visiting a greenhouse might be activities to keep up the garden spirit right now.

And good luck with the early outdoor spring planting, Lois. Let me know how it works out for you. [zbtr@bresnan.net](mailto:zbtr@bresnan.net)