



Peas from Jamaica – Mavis



Description of area

Mavis comes from the St Thomas Parish of Jamaica, around 50 miles from Kingston. This is mainly an agricultural area situated in the southern end of the island, where it is hotter and drier.

Background to Mavis

Mavis spent her childhood in Jamaica, before coming over to the UK. She now spends most of her time growing and has tried her hand at growing a number of Jamaican crops in the UK, some with more success than others!

“It’s about, I would say, 50 miles from Kingston. Our transportation is usually the market truck or the market bus or for the unfortunate folks it’s the mule or the donkey.”

Crops grown in the region

A large range of tropical crops are grown in Jamaica including coconut, yam, dasheen, bananas, oranges, coffee, tomatoes, breadfruit and gungo peas.

“From a child’s perspective farming was fun for us. There were no machine help regarding digging or harvesting, there was no machine help there and it would all be done by hand”

Growing dried peas in Jamaica

Jamaican dishes often use dried peas. Although they are called peas they are really beans that have been grown until the pods are dried out. In Jamaica, gungo peas are often used. The gungo pea grows into a small bush and takes a long time before it is ready.

“Other things always seem to come in before the gungo peas and it grows in a small tree, not a tree to climb, but a small tree and if it’s in good soil the yield is usually very good, extremely good”



Growing and using Jamaican dried peas in the UK

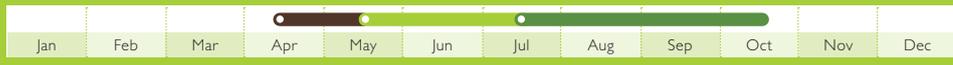
Many Jamaicans grow beans for drying. French beans (*Phaseolus vulgaris*) are one of the easiest beans to grow for drying in the UK. Unfortunately Gungo peas will not reliably set pods in our short growing season.

How to grow

Crop details: Legume: seed. Time to harvest: 15 weeks after sowing.
Grow with other beans in rotation. Size: Moderate.

Growing timeline: Sow indoors April, Plant out May, Harvest July–October.

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Sow

Plant indoors in small pots or trays with large cells in early April. Beans for drying need to be sown early enough to allow a long enough growing season for them to reach maturity. The plants can be transplanted out after the last frost.

Grow

Climbing varieties will need to grow up sticks arranged in a wigwam of sticks or up netting. Dwarf varieties usually don't need support.

Harvest

Pick the pods as they become mature and papery, to maximise the yields. Pods can be harvested as they are turning yellow and dried indoors if Autumn arrives before they are ready.

Cook

- Jamaican rice and peas is a dish traditionally served at Sunday lunch. The water from the kidney beans in this dish give the rice a pink colour.
- Soak 1 cup red kidney beans in 2 cups of water overnight. Keep the water.
- 2 cup of rice (brown or long grain)
- Fry onion in coconut oil with garlic
- Add rice, beans, 2 cups coconut milk, water from beans, chilli, thyme, stock to taste. Simmer for 20 - 25 min, until all the water has been absorbed.

