

# Peanuts

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The amazing peanut actually plants itself. It is pretty and easy to grow.

Peanuts grow into pretty little plants with rounded green leaves and attractive yellow flowers. Despite their name, peanuts aren't, technically speaking, nuts at all; they are seeds which form after the plant has flowered.

These amazing plants actually plant themselves! When the peanut seed pod forms, it grows down to the soil surface and pushes itself in so its seeds grow the following year. Although the plants are easily grown, getting a crop of nuts is tricky - but it's certainly well worth a go.

## How to grow your own peanuts

You need to buy peanuts that still have their shells on because the ones without a shell will be too dried out to grow. Peanuts in shells are often sold as 'monkey nuts' and can be found in pet shops and supermarkets.

Before sowing the seed, you need to crack the shells a little bit. This allows the water to get to the seed and speeds up its growth.

Use a pot about 12cm across. Look at the bottom of your pot and make sure there are holes in order to let water drain out. Fill two-thirds of the pot with multi-purpose compost, and water it

very well so that water starts to drip out the bottom. Sow three or four peanuts, still in their shells, on the compost. Cover them lightly with about 2cm of compost, and water them again.

Put the pot in a clear plastic food bag and tie the ends together. This is to keep all the moisture in and stop the germinating peanuts from drying out.

Put the pot in a warm place, like an airing cupboard. The seeds will grow in a few weeks, but you will need to check them every day. If the compost looks dry, give it a little bit of water.

When the seeds have sprouted, take the pot out of the plastic bag and put it on a sunny windowsill.

As the plants grow, they will need to be repotted. Repot all the seedlings together into a pot measuring 30cm across. Peanuts like to grow in groups, and they need to be planted in a big pot because they require room to bury their seeds.

## Caring for your peanut plants

Water the plants regularly, but do not feed them, as this will stop them

flowering and then they won't produce any nuts. When the plants are in flower, it is best to stand them in the garden so that the bees can pollinate the flowers, which can then produce seeds.

The crop is normally ready for harvest in the autumn. You will know when the nuts are ready for harvesting because the plant will turn yellow and die. Simply pull the plant out of its pot and shake the compost off the roots. You'll see the nuts dangling on stalks.

Remember to save some of the peanuts so you can sow them the following spring and start a whole new crop.

