

Revival of the Carlin Pea 2026

Background

Carlin Peas - sometimes also known as brown, maple or pigeon peas are a great substitute for chickpeas – they have a similar nutty taste and are much easier to grow in this country. In most areas of the UK, they are a forgotten food, but you will still find them in specific regions such as Lancashire or Newcastle where they are eaten out of a cup, sprinkled with salt and vinegar. In these regions, they are commonly eaten on bonfire night or Carlin Sunday, around March.

The tradition of Carlin Sunday dates back to a Medieval feast day in the 12th Century when a dole was given to the poor in the form of dried peas. Carlin Peas also feature in a tale from the civil war in 1644, when Newcastle was under siege from the Scots, and a stranded shipload of peas saved many people from starvation.

It's only more recently they've had a revival, promoted by the company, Hodmedods marketing Carlin Peas grown in Gloucestershire and Shropshire. The consumption of UK pulses has fallen over the last 100 years, where they've been relegated to an accompanying side dish. We're all aware that we need to increase the proportion of protein that we get from plants in our diet to reduce our climate impact. Chickpeas are already popular in many dishes in the UK, but it would be preferable to make better use of home-grown legumes.

Our Heritage Seed Library has several varieties of pea that are good for drying: the Latvian Pea is similar to a Carlin Pea with a lovely nutty taste and is traditionally eaten at Christmas. Minerva is a standard Carlin Pea that has been traditionally grown in the UK.

Aims of this experiment

Building on our work from 2025, we would like to trial several varieties of drying pea at different locations in different growing seasons around the UK and evaluate them for growth, yield and acceptability with our members.

What we need from you:

Space: 2 1 x 1 m plots

Growing care: sowing, planting out and watering the plots

Measurements

- Record date of first flowering
- Record date first pods form
- Record how much you harvested
- Cook it and tell us what you think

Included in this pack

- Instructions
- Dried peas – varieties Minerva and Latvian – **Please note due to a restriction of HSL seed stocks only the first 90 registrants received Latvian peas, so you may have just received Carlin peas.**
- Recording sheets



Instructions

Sowing – Mid March

- Soaking peas overnight is advisable as it can help with the germination
- Fill 40 2" (5 cm) pots or large cell trays with seed compost
- Sow one seed in each pot to a depth of 2 cm
- Keep in a warm place to allow to germinate
- Germination can take 1 - 2 weeks

Plant care – April - May

- Keep the plants in a warm light place such as an unheated glasshouse to allow them to develop
- Once they have developed a couple of true leaves, put the pots outside during the day to allow the plants to harden off

Bed preparation – April / May

- Weed the bed and add compost so that it has moderate levels of fertility
- Construct two wigwams of twiggy sticks, around 2 m high, to allow the plants to climb. Build one wigwam for each variety

Planting out – April / May

- Plant out the 15 best plants around each wigwam, ensuring that you are planting the same plants around each of the two wigwams
- Water as necessary and look for slugs at night. Replace any plants that get badly damaged
- Encourage them to climb up the wigwam
- Weed the plots as needed

Monitoring

- Record the date of first flowering and first pod set

Harvesting – July onwards

- Allow the peas pods to dry on the plant until pods are thin and papery
- Harvest once the pods are dry to prevent them from dropping the peas
- Count the number of pods harvested, and weigh the peas
- For a single harvest in August, take 5 typical pods and count the total number of peas for each variety

Taste test – August

- Soak the dried peas overnight
- Bring to the boil and simmer for about an hour or until tender

Recording sheets

Please note that it is not necessary to provide your name and address on the recording sheet.

Many thanks for your support and for taking part in this experiment.

Please enter the data online using this link:

<https://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/what-we-do/citizen-science-and-research/members-experiments/the-revival-of-the-carlin-pea-2026>

Electronic versions of these instructions are also available at the link above.

You can now store results on the form as you go – press ‘Save’ and it will email you a link, which you can then use to resume entering results. Please keep this email in a safe place so that you can retrieve the results. If you do lose it, then you will need to email us at experiments@gardenorganic.org.uk and ask for a new link. Alternatively you can save the link as a bookmark in your browser so that you can readily access it.

We welcome good quality photos. The best ones may be published in our magazine and on social media. Please send photos to experiments@gardenorganic.org.uk. Unfortunately, we are unable to use hard copy prints.

Returning forms by post

If you prefer to use post, you can return the record sheets to us by **30 October** at the following address:

Members' Experiment Coordinator
Garden Organic
Ryton on Dunsmore
Coventry
CV8 3LG

Recording sheets

Your site

What is the first half of your postcode?

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Soil type

- Very sandy
 Quite sandy
 Silty
 Mix of sand, silt and clay (loam)
- Some clay
 Heavy clay
 Peaty
 Chalky

Shading of plot

- Shaded
 Semi shaded
 Sunny

Your plants

If you only received Carlin peas, leave the Latvian peas spaces blank

Sowing and emergence

What date did you sow peas?

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Did you sow them directly or in pots?

- Directly
 In pots

What date did they first emerge?

Carlin Peas	Latvian Peas

What date did you plant out?

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How many plants did you plant out? (Ideally 15)

Carlin Peas	Latvian Peas

What was the final number of plants that survived beyond one month after planting out?

Carlin Peas	Latvian Peas

Taste test

Please rate how pleasant / Sweet / Bitter the Carlin Peas tasted:					
	Very unpleasant	Unpleasant	Neutral	Pleasant	Very pleasant
Pleasant	<input type="checkbox"/>				
	Not at all	Slightly sweet	Quite sweet	Sweet	Very sweet
Sweet	<input type="checkbox"/>				
	Not at all	Slightly bitter	Quite bitter	Bitter	Very bitter
Bitter	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Please tick any of the other boxes that apply to the Carlin Peas					
	Salty	Nutty	Earthy	Mealy	Creamy
	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Any other comments on the flavour?					

Please rate how pleasant / Sweet / Bitter the Latvian Peas tasted:					
	Very unpleasant	Unpleasant	Neutral	Pleasant	Very pleasant
Pleasant	<input type="checkbox"/>				
	Not at all	Slightly sweet	Quite sweet	Sweet	Very sweet
Sweet	<input type="checkbox"/>				
	Not at all	Slightly bitter	Quite bitter	Bitter	Very bitter
Bitter	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Please tick any of the other boxes that apply to the Latvian Peas					
	Salty	Nutty	Earthy	Mealy	Creamy
	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Any other comments on the flavour?					

Please share any ways that you cooked Carlin or Latvian Peas?

Please tick the box that best applies to your experience with growing Carlin Peas					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I found Carlin Peas easy to grow	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Carlin Peas were productive	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I enjoyed eating Carlin Peas	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Carlin Peas could be grown as an alternative to chickpeas	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Please tick the box that best applies to your experience with growing Latvian Peas					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I found Latvian Peas easy to grow	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Latvian Peas were productive	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I enjoyed eating Latvian Peas	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Latvian Peas could be grown as an alternative to chickpeas	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Any other comments

Would you grow Carlin Peas again?					
	Definitely not	Probably not	Perhaps	Quite likely	Definitely
	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Would you grow Latvian Peas again?					
	Definitely not	Probably not	Perhaps	Quite likely	Definitely
	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Please answer the following questions about members experiments.

Please tick which of the boxes you think applied to your experience of taking part in the members' experiments this year.					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I enjoyed taking part in this experiment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I felt I learnt something new	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I felt I was contributing to something useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am likely to take part again	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other comments					
Any suggestions for future Members experiments					