

Bell County Master Gardeners
Tip of the week
By Jann Dworsky
Sweet Peas for Sweet Pea

Our grand-neighbors have three daughters and a son. The first daughter received the nickname Sweet Pea and we all enjoyed calling her by this nickname. After three or four years we started wondering what the flower, sweet pea, looked like and none of us knew. We had never seen them growing.

It did not take much looking to find sweet peas seeds for sale at a local garden center. The package said plant the sweet peas, or lathyrus, in the fall, in well worked soil, when it is still warm. After about 20 days a few pitiful little seeds sprouted and grew one whole inch! More watering did not help them to grow all winter long. They stayed green and short. Oh boy! This was not quite working out as planned. It is really hard to remember to water a plant only one inch tall all winter!

About the end of January, the sweet peas suddenly started to grow! By the beginning of March they had climbed the wire cage around them and were 4 feet tall. Buds started to form everywhere. In a few weeks there were soft, beautiful clumps of sweet pea blooms in lavender, lilac, maroon, white, red, rose, pink, blue and violet!! The smell was clean, sweet, long lasting, and unforgettable.

The next time our grand- neighbor, Sweet Pea, came over, I was able to show her the lovely flower that was her namesake. She wore some in her hair.

This was my first experience with sweet peas, but in sharing small bouquets to others I have heard all the stories of others who have raised these delightful, old-fashioned plants. You can buy the seeds at most garden centers or from online seed catalogs. Plant these in your garden for a delightfully "sweet" experience. Just have patience and you will be rewarded in the spring! Have any questions about gardening in Central Texas? Contact ask.bcmga@gmail.com

