

# Winter Peas Make Debut in Big Bend Area

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The first acreage of a new crop, winter peas, has been planted in the Waterville and Wilbur, Washington areas this fall. Winter peas were first planted in the CWGG test plots program in 2000. ProGene, Inc. and WSU provided plant material for this screening process. There was a wide variation in the first material that we planted ranging from early to late maturity, different vine types, yellow and green cotyledon types and from low to moderate winter hardiness. It was important to screen this material to determine what variety showed the best adaptation to our area and also to determine if it is economically competitive with winter wheat. This process has demonstrated that two varieties of winter peas have consistently performed well in our area. Both varieties are the leafless vine types that allow



Mark Thomsen standing in his field planted to winter peas.

for direct cutting with a regular grain header, are yellow cotyledon types and to date have shown moderate winter hardiness. In October of 2002, we had 5° F for three nights in a row and these varieties were not hurt by the cold.

We are also interested in the marketing aspects of winter peas and if they compete economically with winter wheat. (See table at bottom.) At the current time, these varieties of peas would most likely move into the feed market. The seed size is a little small for the split market, and the seed coat retains a slight green tinge, which would keep it from going into the whole yellow market. There may be some years that the seed size would be acceptable to the split market. Peas were added to the list of crops eligible for commodity loans and loan deficiency payments in the last farm bill. At the current time, the loan rate for peas is \$6.68/cwt, and the current LDP payment is \$2.68/cwt.

Mark Thomsen from Waterville became first interested in winter peas when he watched the CWGG test plots harvested in one of his fields in 2001. "At first I thought that Howard was crazy when he talked about growing peas in Douglas County," Mark stated. "But when I saw them harvesting the test plots, I could see that there was potential in this crop. My main interest is control of jointed

goatgrass," Mark said. "We've had to switch to spring wheat to control goatgrass. We know that we can make money growing winter wheat, but it's hit and miss growing spring wheat. With winter peas, jointed goatgrass can be controlled with an application of Assure II®. Also the fact that winter peas fix nitrogen from the atmosphere and does not require an application of nitrogen fertilizer is a bonus."

Gale Wolfe of Wilbur also planted some winter peas this fall and says, "We have tried a number of different crops over the years such as sunflowers and are interested in continuing to look for something that will grow successfully in our area other than winter wheat. I'm interested in seeing how things pan out come harvest time. I've seen too many different crops come and go and will wait to see what the final results are before getting too excited about this crop." He goes on to say, "With jointed goatgrass becoming more of a problem all the time, I'm interested in growing a crop that we can spray the jointed goatgrass out and the fact that peas put nitrogen in the ground is a plus."



Gale Wolfe planting winter peas

We'll report the results from these field trials following next year's harvest.

Comparison of Yield and Gross \$/Acre Returns of Winter Peas, Winter Wheat and Winter Triticale						
Crop	Yield			Gross \$/Acre		
	Wilbur 2003	Douglas 2002	Waterville 2001	Wilbur 2003	Douglas 2002	Waterville 2001
91208-3 Winter Pea (lbs/ac)	3564	2697	3671	\$236.97	\$167.90	\$245.22
Eltan Soft White Wheat (bu/ac)	75.0	45.7	68.4	\$240.81	\$159.95	\$220.93
TriMark 336 Triticale (lbs/ac)	6280	3565	2660*	\$314.00	\$181.82	\$109.06*

\* Snow Mold Reduced Yield