



THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
Colleges of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences & Family and Consumer Sciences



The University of Georgia and Ft. Valley State College, the U. S. Department of Agriculture and counties of the state cooperating. The Cooperative Extension Service offers educational programs, assistance, and materials to all people without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex, or disability. An equal opportunity/affirmative action organization committed to a diverse work force.

Georgia Pecan Nut News

Vol.2, Issue 4

Fall 2006

www.ugapecan.org

Contents.....

Timely Harvest
Late Season Weed Control
Drying Early Harvest Pecans
Plant Clover ASAP
Remove Trees Prior to the "On" Year

Timely Harvest Critical

Lenny Wells

With an obviously short crop of highly valuable pecans expected this year, growers should make every effort to harvest their crop in a timely manner. Growers should not risk losing nuts to birds and/or mammals in a year like this.

Of course, orchards located near woods or abandoned fields are more likely to suffer heavy losses from wildlife consumption of nuts. Birds normally begin damaging pecans around the first of October. Squirrels begin about a month earlier.

A single crow may consume or damage 15 lbs of nuts per month from shuck split to harvest. Blue jays will consume about ½ as much as crows. Squirrels may account for 3.5 lbs of pecans lost per week.

In addition, early pecan harvest can help reduce weevil problems in an orchard. Needless to say, with the price that growers can expect for a limited supply of nuts in the

2006 harvest season, they should not risk losing nuts to predation.

The early price should be particularly good. When examining the record of prices beginning in October, the price is normally at least 10 to 15 cents higher than in December.

The pecan marketing system demands high quality nuts early. Bear in mind that when the nut is mature and dehisces from the shuck, it is at peak maturity and quality can only go down from there.

Late Season Weed Control

Lenny Wells

Preharvest preparation of the orchard floor should be taking place at this time. If your summer weed control program is sound, a single application of a postemergence herbicide may provide enough weed control to last through harvest.

If a heavy weed flush is expected, tank mix Simazine or Solicam with glyphosate for residual control. These materials normally provide better winter weed control.

For Surflan and Simazine, the rate for tank mixing should be 2-4 qts./A. Use the low rate of Simazine on sandy soils.

Chemical mowing of row middles with a low rate of glyphosate can be an effective and economical means of vegetation

suppression. Rate selection will depend on the vigor of vegetative growth.

Stress-hardened vegetation when revived by rainfall is difficult to suppress with herbicides. In such situations, rate selection can be puzzling. In this case, it is better to err on the low rate side and provide only temporary suppression.

Chem mow applications of glyphosate should be made at rates of 2 -16 oz in a spray volume of 10 gallons/A or less. Consult specific labels for surfactant requirements. Allow a minimum of 21 days between last application and harvest.

Drying Early Harvest Pecans

Paul Sumner

Once pecans have ripened and fall from the tree, they are still high in moisture content. The moisture content of the pecan kernel should be reduced to about 8% ASAP after harvest and to 4.5% before long term storage.

As pecans mature on the tree, the moisture level of the sap in the kernels drops from 30% to 8% when the shucks split. Buyers will accept nuts that have an 8% moisture level; however, the price may be lowered due to excessive moisture.

Pecans shaken from the tree have higher moisture content than those that naturally drop. It is necessary to dry shaken nuts to reduce kernel moisture to 8% and maintain quality. If ground conditions are dry and fair weather expected for several days, pecans can dry naturally on the orchard floor.

As a general rule when drying pecans, higher temperature, lower humidity, and increased air flow all increase drying speed. However, each of these factors has practical limits, and each must be monitored closely during the drying process to maintain good quality control.

The optimum dryer temperature is 95 degrees F. Air temperatures should not



exceed 100 degrees F. Temperatures above this tend to create off flavors, darkening of the nut meat, and a general loss of quality. Lower temperatures can dry pecans effectively but more slowly.

Dryer humidity varies with weather conditions and the temperature of the forced air, but the relative humidity of the dryer air should remain below 60%. Lower relative humidity will increase drying time. When drying with unheated air, the fan should be turned off when humidity is above 60%.

The recommended air flow is approximately 90 cubic ft per minute of air per square foot of drying floor operating against a static pressure head of 1" of water. With 8 X 14 trailers the drying area per trailer is 112 sq ft. Hence, the total air flow in the system should deliver 10,080 cfm.

Plant Clover to Reduce N Costs

Lenny Wells

With the high cost of fertilizer, many growers are looking to clover as a source of N. Growers who wish to take advantage of this excellent source of N should make plans to begin planting clover immediately after pecan harvest is complete.

Crimson clover should be drilled at 15-18 lbs/A or broadcast at 20-30 lbs/A. White clover, including 'Durana' should be drilled at 2-3 lbs/A. Increase the broadcast

rate by 25%. Growers should be certain to obtain the correct inoculant for the clover that is planted. Without inoculant, clover will not be able to fix nitrogen.

Clovers grow best at a soil pH of 6.5 and the N-fixing bacteria responsible for clover's N benefit will die at a pH below 5.0.

The approximate cost of clover seed and inoculant is \$40/A. At 2006 N prices of \$72/A, this represents a difference of \$32/A. Clover can supply from 50-100% of the N required for a pecan crop, depending on crop load. In fact, a well established stand of clover can supply enough N to forego the spring N application. This saves the grower \$36-\$72/A, without considering fuel savings from reduced mowing.

Bear in mind that it requires 2-3 years following clover establishment for pecan trees to receive the full N benefit that clover can provide. Therefore, N applications may continue to be necessary for the first 2 years of clover establishment.

reserves for the season after. This increases the likelihood of getting another return crop.

If trees are removed prior to an "off" year, the trees that are already set up for an "off" crop will also have access to more sunlight, nutrients, and soil moisture. This is likely to result in an overcrop situation two seasons following the thinning. An overloaded crop will result in poor quality pecans and a low return crop.



Remove Trees Prior to the "On" Year

Lenny Wells

The last few pecan seasons have helped to convince many growers of the need to open up sunlight to the pecan orchard by removing trees. Whether a grower chooses to do this by removing every other row on the diagonal or by selective tree removal, the orchard should be thinned in the winter prior to an "on" year.

Based on the 2006 crop, this winter looks to be the time to remove trees. Female flower induction occurs in August, therefore the crop for the following year is already set at the time of winter thinning.

Removing trees prior to an "on" year allows those trees that remain access to more sunlight, nutrients, and soil moisture, which helps to increase quality in the "on" year crop and provides additional carbohydrate

DATES TO REMEMBER

GPGA Fall Field Day
USDA Fruit & Nut Lab
Byron, GA
September 14, 2006

**SE Fruit & Vegetable Growers Conference
(Pecan Session)**
Savannah Convention Center
Savannah, GA
January 4-6, 2007

Edited by
Lenny Wells
Extension Horticulturist-Pecans

Contributors:
UGA PECAN TEAM
Jason Brock, Ext. Pathologist-Pecans
Will Hudson, Ext. Entomologist-Pecans
Paul Sumner, Ext. Ag. Engineer-Pecans
Lenny Wells, Ext. Horticulturist-Pecans

