

Rotating Extension Column  
Date: October 6, 2009  
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### **Pecans - These Locally Grown Treats Will Be Ready Soon**

Late October in West Florida brings beautiful weather and the beginning of pecan harvest. Though Florida's number of pecan trees don't compare to Georgia, Texas or other major pecan producing states, there are enough nuts locally produced to help satisfy the demand.

The pecan is an interesting crop. It is native to the United States, with Northern Florida being the southern-most boundary of its range.

This is the largest of the hickories, with some trees reaching a height of over 100 feet and a spread of up to 75 feet.

The latest report indicates that there are 8,652 acres of pecans being grown on 963 farms in Florida. Of this acreage, 6,741 were reported as bearing orchards. One third of this acreage is native production, while the remainder is made up of improved varieties. Many pecans are also locally produced and harvested by homeowners who have from one to several trees growing in the landscape.

Florida pecan production fluctuates from year to year. This crop is notorious for alternate bearing - a heavy production year is usually followed by one or two seasons of lower production as the trees recover and build up strength. Hurricanes, other extreme weather events and pests also affect some years' production.

The best Florida pecan crop on record was produced in 1999 with 3.7 million pounds. Almost two million pounds were also produced in 2007.

The lowest years of production in recent history were 2004 and 2006. Most local residents will recall that Hurricanes Ivan in 2004 and Dennis in 2005 affected pecan production and many other aspects of our lives.

Pecan breeding and selection has resulted in over 150 varieties or cultivars. Characteristics of these different cultivars determine which ones are grown in a particular region. Locally, recommended cultivars include 'Elliott', Curtis and Sumner because they have a combination of good yields, high quality and disease resistance.

Newer cultivars that are highly recommended include 'Lakota', 'Excel', 'Gafford' and 'Headquarters'. Many of the western cultivars, especially those with native American names such as Pawnee, though they begin bearing at an early age, cannot be recommended due to having less disease resistance in the Southeast.

Watch for this year's pecans to become available by early November.

They will be available through on-farm direct sales, in retail stores, at pecan accumulator locations and at pecan specialty markets and shops.

A new, seven page illustrated fact sheet is available from the University of Florida for anyone interested in more in-depth information about pecans. The document, "Florida Crop/Pest

**Management Profile:**

Pecan", was published in August, 2009 by the Department of Horticultural Sciences. To download, print or view a copy, go to [edis.ifas.ufl.edu/PI217](http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/PI217). Your local Florida Extension office can also provide a copy.

For more information or if you have a question, call Dan Mullins, Extension Commercial Horticulture Agent, The University of Florida/IFAS-Santa Rosa County Extension, at 850-623-3868, between the hours of 8:00 am and 4:30 pm weekdays. Hearing impaired individuals may call Santa Rosa County Emergency Management Service at 983-5373 (TDD).

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