

Victoria County Master Gardener Association



**Pecans:
Choosing
the state
tree of
Texas for
your
backyard**

**By Victoria County
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Out of 500 named varieties of pecan trees, about a dozen are recommended for each area of Texas.

Contributed Photo by Texas A&M Forest Service

The pecan tree became the official state tree of Texas in 1919, credited to Governor Hogg's love for the tree. Pecans are native to about 150 counties in Texas and capable of growing and producing in all of Texas.

Texas is divided into four regions for growing pecans. Victoria and all Texas counties east of a vertical line running from Grayson County to Bexar to Hidalgo are included in the Eastern Zone. Specific varieties are recommended for each of the four zones.

Let's look at general minimum expectations to see if growing pecans in your backyard is feasible:

1. Fertile, well-drained soil;
2. Full sun;
3. Irrigation when rainfall is insufficient;
4. Foliar zinc sprays if soil pH is higher than 6.5;
5. Applications of nitrogen;
6. Spraying for pests and diseases, particularly pecan nut casebearer and scab;
7. Adequate space, at least 30 feet from a building, driveway, or power line, 50 feet or more between trees.

See Resources below for more details.

Growing pecans in the scab prone region: After determining that growing pecans is right for you, let's look at the Eastern Zone of Texas. It is known for moderate to high disease susceptibility, primarily scab. Scab is a type of fungus that thrives in moist humid conditions and can totally destroy a pecan crop.

Solutions are maintaining good air circulation around trees and choosing trees with strongest scab resistance. Spraying fungicide a few times a year is still recommended, but not 5 to 10 times often required by scab susceptible trees.

Vigilance in dealing with diseases and insects is a major key to success in growing pecans. That includes spraying for scab as soon as we see that moisture is high and conditions are conducive to scab. Damage has already been done when we see the telltale black spots on leaves or nutlets. Texas A&M AgriLife publications and county agents are valuable resources to help you.

Recommended varieties for East Texas zone: cultivars kanza, lakota, Elliott, mandan and Apalachee are most scab resistant and suitable for the Eastern Zone. Also suitable are Caddo and oconee, then forkert and prilop. Desirable and Pawnee are intermediate, but still acceptable and widely grown in this zone.

Cheyenne, Kiowa, cape fear, Sioux, Choctaw and Wichita are no longer recommended for the Eastern region.

Other factors: After narrowing choices to scab resistant varieties, final decisions can be based on the following factors:

1. How long it takes for the variety to bear its first crop — from 4 to 12 years;
2. How many pounds the variety is known to produce;
3. Whether the tree is alternate bearing (every second year);
4. Susceptibility to other pests and diseases;
5. Appearance and structure of tree; and
6. Size, taste, and quality of the nut.

There is no perfect pecan tree. Choose which factors are most important to you.

Pollination:

After deciding which cultivar to plant, our next question is whether a second tree is needed for pollination. Pecan trees bear male and female flowers at different locations on the same tree; however, the bloom times seldom coincide. There is little or no overlap between timing of pollen shedding of the male flower and receptivity of the female flowers, which is a good thing.

In the few varieties of trees that self-pollinate due to some degree of overlap, nut quality is inferior. We need a second tree, a pollinator of a different variety with good overlap of time frames for pollen shedding and receptivity.

When you are ready to plant, do some research. Recommended varieties change over time. You will be proud to relax in the shade of our state tree in your own backyard.

A web search can reveal recommended pollinizers for any variety.

Humidity at time of pollination can significantly decrease the pecan crop in any given year.

Pollinizer should be planted 50 to 100 feet from our selection.

If native pecan trees are in sight of our planting location or within 300 feet, it may not be necessary to plant a pollinizer.

Pecan trees are wind-pollinated; bees or insects are not required to complete pollination.

The Gardeners' Dirt is written by members of the Victoria County Master Gardener Association, an educational outreach of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension – Victoria County. Mail your questions in care of the Advocate, P.O. Box 1518, Victoria, TX 77901; or vcmga@vicad.com.

Pollination

- ◆ **Suggested pollinizers for some scab resistant varieties**
- ◆ **Caddo - Suggested pollinizers are Elliott, Kanza or Stuart**
- ◆ **Elliott - Suggested pollinizers are Caddo or Desirable**
- ◆ **Kanza- Suggested pollinizers are Caddo or Desirable**
- ◆ **Apalachee - Suggested pollinizers are Kanza or Lakota**

Resources

"Texas Pecan Handbook," Texas A&M AgriLife

"Texas Fruit and Nut Production: Improved Pecans," TAMU publication # E-609 2-13 - https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/fruit-nut/files/2015/04/pecans_improved_2015.pdf

"Texas A&M AgriLife Extension - Fruit and Nut Resources, Evaluating Pecan Problems" <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/fruit-nut/fact-sheets/evaluating-pecan-problems/>

"Pecan Pests in the Home Orchard," Publication ENTO-PU-168, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension <https://extensionentomology.tamu.edu/resources/management-guides/pecan-pests-in-the-home-orchard/>

References

Monte Nesbitt, Texas A&M AgriLife, South Texas Fruit and Nut Advanced Training Course for Master Gardeners

"Texas Pecan Handbook," Texas A&M AgriLife

"Home Fruit Production - Pecans" - John A. Lipe, Larry Stein, George Ray McEachern, John Begnaud and Sammy Helmers, Extension Horticulturists, <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/extension/homefruit/pecan/pecan.html> This Publication is not current. Recommended varieties are no longer correct.

"Texas Fruit and Nut Production: Improved Pecans," TAMU publication # E-609 2-13 - https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/fruit-nut/files/2015/04/pecans_improved_2015.pdf

"Texas Fruit and Nut Production: Native Pecans," TAMU publication # E-610 2-13 - https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/fruit-nut/files/2015/04/pecans_native_2015.pdf

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension - "Fruit and Nut Resources, Evaluating Pecan Problems" <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/fruit-nut/fact-sheets/evaluating-pecan-problems/>

"Pecan Pests in the Home Orchard," Publication ENTO-PU-168, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension - <https://extensionentomology.tamu.edu/resources/management-guides/pecan-pests-in-the-home-orchard/>