



Texas Agricultural Extension Service

The Texas A&M University System

VALLEY PEACH & PECAN NOTES

JANUARY, 1996

VOL. 11, NO. 1

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CHILLING UNITS -----

While I haven't computed the actual amount of chilling received at Weslaco to date this season, it does not currently appear that lack of chilling should be a problem this year. With few exceptions, high temperatures in the three weeks since mid-December have ranged in the 50's to low 60's almost daily, with lows in the 30's to 50's.

Although best chilling occurs below 45, our low-chill, short-cycle peaches also accumulate chilling at temperatures up to the low 60's. Notwithstanding that these higher temperatures are less effective for chilling, remember that it doesn't take long to accumulate 150 to 200 hours, particularly if no adversely warm temperatures occur to negate chilling. Even considering only 6 units per day of effective chilling, that's over 120 hours in the last three weeks.

PECAN ORCHARD MANAGEMENT

SHORT COURSE -----

This annual event is scheduled for January 22-26 on the Texas A&M University campus at College Station. It is a complete short course in pecan orchard management—starting with site selection and going on from there. As such, it is as useful for those contemplating going into the pecan orchard business as it is for veteran growers who need to brush up on orchard management practices and procedures.

Contact Ms. Jacque Hand at 409/845-8904 (Fax 409/845-2519). Registration is \$150.

U.S. PECAN CROP -----

The USDA has revised the total U.S. pecan crop estimate to 239 million pounds, down from the initial forecast of 248 million. Even so, this estimate still shows some 40 million pounds over the 1994 crop.

For Texas, the estimate remained unchanged at 60 million pounds—40 million pounds of varieties and 20 million pounds of natives. That's 20 million pounds over the 1994 crop.

WESLACO PECAN CROP -----

While the state and nation are looking at a moderate "on" year in pecan production, the variety block on station at Weslaco is mostly in an "off" year. Only Caddo and Shoshoni produced more nuts in 1995 than in 1994, with Choctaw, Tejas and Western being unchanged. The other nine varieties were all down from 1994.

During the last six years, Cheyenne, Kiowa, Shawnee, Shoshoni and Wichita have exhibited the greatest tendency to alternate bearing. However, 1992 was the best year in the history of this orchard, preceded by a 1991 crop that was lower than the 1986 crop (the first recorded production for most of the varieties).

After 1991 is when these alternate bearing tendencies really stand out. It should be noted that this orchard has received only modest to minimal care since 1991. In fact, total production since 1992 has declined steadily every year to the point that production is less than one-third of that achieved in 1992.

This goes to show the effect of chronic poor care on pecan orchard productivity. I plan to take full responsibility for the future care of this orchard, so we should be able to determine how long it takes to turn this orchard around and put it into acceptable productivity. The next couple of years should be interesting.

COMING EVENTS -----

There will be a sprayer calibration

training program at the Hoblitzelle Auditorium of the Texas A&M University Agricultural Research and Extension Center on Wednesday, January 17, starting at 8:00 am. Call Brad Cowan, Hidalgo County Extension Agricultural Agent, for details (210/383-1026).

The 50th Annual Horticultural Institute of the Rio Grande Valley Horticultural Society is scheduled for Tuesday, January 23 at the Texas A&M University Agricultural Research and Extension Center's Hoblitzelle Auditorium, 9:30 am to 12:45 pm.

Of particular interest should be the talk by Norman Maxwell on A Historical Perspective of the Fruit Industry, as Norman was actively involved in efforts to establish peaches, grapes and other fruits as commercial ventures in South Texas since the inception of the Rio Grande Valley Horticultural Society half a century ago.

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