



# Texas Agricultural Extension Service

The Texas A&M University System

## VALLEY PEACH & PECAN NOTES

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### IN THIS ISSUE:

RETIREMENT  
PARASITIC NEMATODE  
PECAN ORCHARD DEBRIS  
PECAN SHUCKS FOR BEE MITE  
CONTROL  
COMMON PECAN PROBLEMS AT  
HARVEST

### RETIREMENT -----

The ranks of Extension horticulturists who support county Extension programs and Texas fruit growers are about to get thinner still. Dr. Calvin Lyons, Professor and Extension Horticulturist for fruits, has announced his forthcoming retirement, effective November 15. Calvin and Sylvia are returning to the Tampa Bay area of central Florida where Calvin will assume the management responsibilities of the family citrus orchards.

I cannot pass the opportunity to relate a story that Calvin's mother told me a couple of years back. It seems that when Calvin was just a wee lad (I know, he still isn't very tall), he decided to bud some citrus trees. Apparently, his budding techniques were quite good, as he got several "takes"—unfortunately, he inserted all the buds upside down!

### PARASITIC NEMATODE -----

While pecan weevil is not a recognized pest of pecan in the Valley

and surrounding counties, it is noteworthy that a nematode discovered in the Valley is being tested as a biological control of pecan weevil. The nematode is Steinernema riobravis and it is being marketed by Biosys as BioVector 355 in either liquid or water dispersible granule forms.

Though tests on pecan weevil are still on-going, this nematode is showing pretty good results on the control of Diaprepes abbreviatus (sugarcane rootstock borer weevil) in Florida citrus orchards. With Diaprepes, the adult feeds on and notches the new leaves of citrus while the larvae feed extensively on the tree's roots, with root damage being the most significant.

Apparently, this nematode is both a hunter and an ambusher in that it will attack weevil larvae that happen by but will also actively seek out weevil larvae. Incidentally, the name riobravis is latinized Rio Bravo, the Mexican name for the Rio Grande River.

### PECAN ORCHARD DEBRIS -----

Orchard floor sanitation is not widely practiced in pecans, but this practice is a positive first step in managing certain pecan pests. The hickory shuckworm is

a perennial pecan pest in south Texas, but did you know that overwintering populations exist as mature larvae in pecan shucks and unfilled nuts, providing a ready source of infestation for the next season? Such being the case, it is advisable to remove or destroy these overwintering sites as soon as harvest is completed.

Twig girdlers are a sometime pest in South Texas which overwinter as larvae in fallen twigs and branches. Good orchard sanitation to destroy such wood is advisable. Shredding can hasten the destruction of this material, but is not completely effective by itself.

If orchard disking or cultivation is practiced, incorporating the shucks and small limbs or twigs into the soil will result in fairly quick decomposition if soil moisture is adequate.

In commercial harvesters, it would be nice to see an attachment to collect the trash that is separated when the nuts are picked up. That way, the shucks and twigs could be easily removed from the orchard and destroyed. Maybe there is a harvester with that feature—I don't know.

### **PECAN SHUCKS FOR BEE MITE CONTROL? -----**

Frank Eischen, our resident bee expert here at Weslaco, asked permission to collect pecan shucks from our pecan variety test orchard. It seems that walnut shucks contain some property that affects the mites that infest honeybees. Since walnut shucks aren't in plentiful supply around here, Frank plans to see if pecan shucks have similar activity. We'll keep you posted as to the results, if any.

### **COMMON PECAN PROBLEMS AT HARVEST -----**

Poorly filled pecans, if recurrent year after year, indicate inadequate soil and management. However, poor filling in some years and not in others usually indicates poor irrigation and/or a particularly heavy crop.

Stick tights usually indicate insufficient irrigation pre-harvest or other stress such as hickory shuckworm damage or disease problems.

Vivipary is the condition that is characterized by pecans sprouting while still on the tree. While there are varietal differences, vivipary is caused by inadequate pre-harvest irrigation or other stress problems.

Black spots occurring on the kernel of the pecan are the result of stink bug damage.

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