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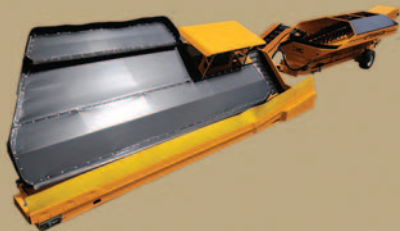


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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

August 2026

- **August 19-20, 2026**
UGA Pecan Workshop
Athens, GA
- **August 26, 2026**
Southeast Pecan Field Day
Wilbur Murrays
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- **August 27-28, 2026**
Arizona Pecan Growers Conference
Tucson, AZ

September 2026

- **September 3, 2026**
GPGA Fall Field Day
Southern Hills Orchards
Leesburg, GA
More information on page 48
- **September 9-10, 2026**
NPSA Annual Meeting
Hotel Paseo Del Norte
El Paso, TX
More information at ilovepecans.org
- **September 16-17, 2026**
Alabama Pecan Growers Conference
Robertsdale, AL

October 2026

- **October 8-18, 2026**
Georgia National Fair
Perry, GA
- **October 14-16, 2026**
Global Produce & Floral Show
Orlando, FL

November 2026

- **December 20, 2026**
Georgia Agribusiness Council
Harvest Celebration
Athens, GA

December 2026

- **December 6-8, 2026**
Georgia Farm Bureau Conference
Jekyll Island, GA

Fall 2026

- **Check your mailboxes for your
2027 GPGA Membership renewals!**

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ON THE COVER

Enjoying the last stretch of summer before harvest season begins!

Photo by: Kathy Weesner

The Pecan Grower **Newsletter**



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EDITOR'S LETTER

Greetings!

Now that we are into August, pecan growers are focused on the management decisions that will impact this year's crop. From irrigation and pest control, to monitoring crop development, the end of summer marks a critical time in the season as orchards move closer to harvest.



In this issue of *The Pecan Grower*, you'll find research updates, production information, industry news, and features that reflect the current priorities and challenges facing the pecan industry. Our goal is to provide relevant information that helps growers stay informed and make sound management decisions.

The Georgia Pecan Growers Association continues to work on behalf of growers through advocacy efforts, marketing programs, research support, and educational opportunities. These initiatives are designed to strengthen demand for pecans and support the long-term success of our industry.

Thank you to our members, advertisers, researchers and industry partners for your continued support of *The Pecan Grower*. We hope this issue provides valuable information and insights as you prepare for the busy months ahead.

Wishing you a safe, productive, and successful season. 🌰

Best Regards,

Mary Mikelyn Bruorton

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EXPERT ADVICE

with Dr. Lenny Wells

Extension Horticulturist, University of Georgia

August: A Crucial Month for Pecans in the South

Summer in the South is hot and pecan trees like it that way, especially if they are getting the water they need. Water use in mature pecan trees peaks from June through late August and into early September. This mechanism is what allows pecan trees to continue functioning even at temperatures above 95 degrees when the photosynthetic activity of most hardwood species tends to shut down.

But how much water is enough?

If you overwater during nut sizing, you are gambling that you will be able to fill the kernels in late August and September. What you need to know is that without one or two good rain events during August and September, irrigation alone is not enough to fill those kernels when there is a big crop on the trees. The larger the nuts, the harder they are to fill. Therefore, you should be watering at 45% of full capacity, which equates to 1,620 gal/acre/day from July through mid-August for most varieties.

From mid-August to mid-September you should be watering at 100% (full capacity being 3,600 gal/acre/day). This schedule is common knowledge by now for most growers. However, what is it about the nut's development that drives the tree to use water in this way? How and when does nut development affect nutrient uptake or movement of nutrients from the leaf to the nut?

The ovule that will be filled with kernel develops slowly following pollination. The integument on the outside of the ovule that will eventually become the seed coat of the kernel first begins to expand rapidly in mid-June, a little over 50 days after pollination. By late July, the ovule has grown to nearly half the length of the nut, forcing its way into the "packing tissue" via the pressure created by the liquid endosperm inside. When you make a longitudinal slice of the nut in late July/early August to check for the proper time to fruit thin, the ovule is the U-shaped cavity you see developing inside. At that time, the shell begins to harden at its tip.

Continued on Page 10, See South



South, Continued from Page 9

For eighty to ninety days after pollination, the fruit grows to its full size, slowly at first and then more rapidly as the month of July progresses. Inside the fruit, the endosperm---the nutritive liquid that feeds the embryo (kernel) as it grows has been rapidly developing. The endosperm is the technical name for the liquid we find inside the nut when we cut into them in the “water stage” as shell hardening approaches. This liquid fills the inside of the ovule as it expands. The liquid is full of nutrients and sugars, and can be compared to coconut milk, in all but taste.

To this point, nut size has been the tree’s primary concern. Water availability is the driving force behind this process and adequate soil moisture leads to optimal nut size. This great need is reflected in the rapid increase in water use by the tree when nut sizing begins and it remains high through kernel filling, though by late kernel filling, the efficiency of water uptake seems to be reduced.

Tree nutrition also plays a role, as well as sunlight and hot days/warm nights. As mentioned, pecans can continue to function properly at very hot temperatures, given adequate water, leading to very rapid nut growth. Between July 15 and August 15 nuts increase by one-half to two-thirds of their total size. The weight of the nut increases significantly during this period and at the same time, there is significant movement of Nitrogen (N), Potassium (K), and Calcium(Ca), into the nuts.

However, this movement does not come at the expense of that in the shoots until kernel filling begins,

because prior to kernel filling, these elements are also still accumulating in the shoots more rapidly than they are being used by the nuts if the nutrients are available. Calcium is shuttled to the developing fruit mostly prior to shell hardening because it is more valuable in the formation of structural tissues like the shell rather than the kernel. N and K continue to move into the nut following shell hardening.

All this time, the embryo that will become the kernel remains microscopic in size. By mid-August, the shell is completely hardened, and the ovule has reached the full length of the fruit. The embryo or kernel itself finally begins rapid growth, absorbing the liquid endosperm as it grows. Around this time, the developing embryo or future kernel inside the ovule is about half the full length of the fruit, filling up the seed coat or integument of the ovule as it goes. As the kernel grows in length, more gel layers are laid down on the inside of the seed coat, forming what we know as the gel stage.

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South Continued from Page 10

As the kernel reaches its full length by late August, the ovule is full of gel, which is rapidly hardening and forming the “dough” of the “dough stage”, which will mature and harden into what we know as the kernel. The high energy requirement of this process is reflected by the tree’s prioritization of resources to the developing kernel.

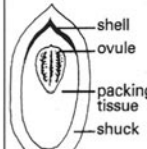
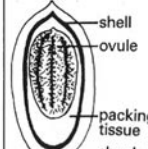
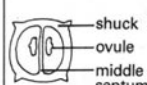
Everything about the tree’s physiology seems to shift with the kernel filling process. There is a rapid influx of N, Phosphorus (P), K, and Magnesium (Mg) into the fruit from August 15 to September 15, fueling the accumulation of oils, proteins and sugars in the nuts as the kernel fills. During this period, nuts are withdrawing all these elements except P from the shoots at a more rapid rate than they are being replaced.

Adding additional N, K, and Mg to already healthy, well fertilized trees at this time won’t improve the situ-

ation because it is the tree’s physiology that has shifted to shuttle the nutrients to the nuts. The process is not changed simply by giving the tree more. They should already have adequate supplies of these nutrient elements before the kernel filling process begins. Based on the tree’s use of K, mid and late season applications of K likely do little to aid in current season’s nut development but have the potential for helping the following year. Any nutrients applied this late in the season are used primarily for the following year’s crop.

Zinc (Zn) is important to pecan trees because it is fundamental to the formation of chlorophyll. It is also involved in the metabolism of plant hormones (auxin) that are crucial for early fruit set and initial growth and expansion of the nut. It boosts the production of amino acids into proteins and promotes higher oil content as well.

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STAGE 1. Post-Pollination	STAGE 2. Early Nut Sizing	STAGE 3. Rapid Nut Sizing	STAGE 4. Late Nut Sizing	STAGE 5. Early Kernel Filling	STAGE 6. Kernel Filling	STAGE 7. Late Kernel Filling	STAGE 8. Shuck Split
							
							
1 week* after pollination Early May	6 weeks after pollination Early June	9 weeks after pollination Mid June	12 weeks after pollination Late July	13 weeks after pollination Early August	15 weeks after pollination Mid August	19 weeks after pollination Mid September	24 weeks after pollination Mid-Late October
Stigmas turn brown. Catkins drop. First nut drop occurs.	Nuts grow slowly. Fertilization occurs. Second nut drop.	Nuts grow rapidly, but no kernel development yet. Early water stage. Third nut drop.	Mid water stage. Shell hardening begins at tip.	Water stage. Shell hardening half complete.	Late water stage. Early gel and dough stages. Shell hardening complete.	Late “dough” stage. Kernel development near completion.	Kernel development complete. Nuts can be shaken from shucks.

*Dates vary with season, location, and cultivar. Diagrams modified from Wolstenholme, B. N., and J. B. Storey, 1970. Pecan Quarterly 4(4):15-19.

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Zinc concentration in foliage tends to peak in early July, decreases to around the time kernel filling begins and then increases again before the end of kernel filling in mid-September. However, the fluctuations in leaf Zn through the season are much less than that observed for nutrients like N and K, both of which begin to decline rapidly from the leaf in late July just before kernel filling starts. Zinc in the fruit increases from early August to late September but at much lower levels than we see for N and K. This big shift in the tree's physiology, once the kernel begins its rapid development, is a vulnerable time for the tree.

Another important event that is taking place in the tree in early August, about the time shell hardening is half completed and the kernel begins to grow significantly, is pistillate flower induction. That's just a fancy term for the stimulus causing a meristem (think of a meristem as a stem cell or an undeveloped bud) to change from a vegetative to reproductive state. All this occurs at a cellular level so there is no visible evidence of this at the time it occurs.

In pecan, it seems that this stimulus takes the form of plant hormones (promoters) derived from the leaves, which maintain the induced meristem or developing bud in a reproductive state. Thus, leaf: fruit ratio becomes important. The greater the leaf: fruit ratio in early to mid-August, the more buds will be "promoted" to be reproductive for the following year. The reverse can be true

as well. A low leaf: fruit ratio (heavier crop load) in early August may generate hormones that inhibit buds from being reproductive. This outcome is one reason why it is so important to maintain healthy foliage and manage crop load through this period. The lack of induction appears to be the usual cause of alternate bearing in young, vigorous trees and seems to be the primary cause in older, mature trees.

Secondarily, lack of nutrients, tree stress from insect or disease damage, drought, excessive crop load, as examples, can also suppress winter carbohydrate reserves

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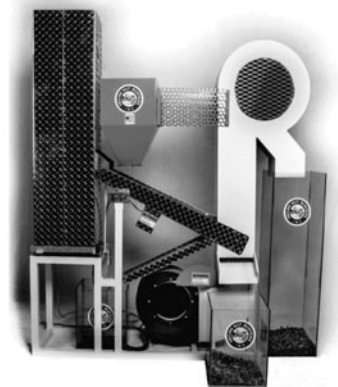
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in the roots, which can cause a reversion of reproductive meristems and abortion of flowers. While plant hormones operate on a shoot level to affect alternate bearing, lack of carbohydrate reserves operate on a whole-tree level. Abundant carbohydrate reserves do not ensure a large return bloom because they don't directly impact floral induction. But the lack of adequate carbohydrates can indirectly lead to the reversion of reproductive meristems to a vegetative state and flower abortion in the spring.

The vulnerability of pecans in terms of both this year's quality and next year's crop load make August the most important month of the year for pecan management. There is a lot going on in the tree to fill those kernels and to determine what next year's crop will look like. All of this requires a lot of energy. Do everything in your power to prevent stress on the trees during this time. Maintain the health of those leaves, including the summer flush of growth. Watch insects like black aphids and mites and treat accordingly to prevent damage. Water appropriately from the time of nut sizing

onward, especially in August as kernels begin to fill, and ensure carbohydrate reserves are not depleted. If leaf samples indicate inadequate nutrition or if there is a heavy crop load on the tree, apply additional fertilizer where needed, primarily in the form of Nitrogen. Keep an eye on Potassium levels as well but bear in mind that after shells begin to harden and the kernel begins its rapid development, any fertilizer you apply is for next year's crop.

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National Pecan Federation Washington, D.C. Update

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Chairman Thompson Releases Draft Agriculture Labor Legislation

U.S. House Agriculture Committee Chairman Thompson released draft legislation on June 30th to provide reforms to H-2A agricultural workforce programs. The Securing Agriculture's Workforce Act builds off the set of bipartisan recommendations of the Agriculture Labor Working Group (ALWG), which was formed among U.S. House Agriculture Committee members in the 118th Congress.

The ALWG was comprised of seven Republican members and seven Democrat members who hosted roundtables and hearings among stakeholders to identify the shortcomings of the H-2A program and potential policy solutions. The Securing Agriculture's Workforce Act addresses challenges that farmers are currently facing by:

Expanding Access

- Removes the requirement that the work must be seasonal in nature, leaving in place that the work must be temporary, which is defined as a job contract of 350 days or less.

- Modifies what is considered "agriculture labor or services" to address the needs of the sector and transfers the authority to further define this term to the Secretary of Agriculture.

Controlling Costs

- Codifies recent reforms to the Adverse Effect Wage Rate (AEWR) methodology to provide farmers and workers certainty and stability rather than continuing to allow rulemaking and litigation to cause upheaval.

- Reduces compliance costs through simplifying program requirements.

Streamlining

- Mandates the creation of an online platform in which all interactions and correspondence between employers and relevant agencies can occur in a timely manner.

- Clarifies the roles of the federal agencies to prevent duplication and provide consistency in interpretation and implementation of policy and procedure.

- Provides common sense flexibilities necessary for the dynamic nature of agricultural production and the diversity of use cases while maintaining strong, rules-based standards.

Continued on Page 20, See Update



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Update, Continued from Page 18

Additionally, this legislation provides a limited waiver of sections 212(a) and 237(a) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) to allow aliens with a history of working full-time in agriculture the opportunity to come forward to apply for a transition to H-2A status, provided they meet the other requirements of the program, which include in person interviews and security background checks.

U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee Releases Draft Farm Bill 2.0 Legislation

U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman John Boozman released his discussion draft version of Farm Bill 2.0 legislation. The Agricultural Act of 2026, or commonly referred to as "Farm Bill 2.0," builds upon the traditional Farm Bill provisions included in last year's final passage of H.R. 1, the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA). Additionally, this draft legislation includes many of the provisions recently included in the U.S. House-passed H.R. 7567, the Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2026.

This Farm Bill 2.0 legislation hosts a variety of provisions to support the specialty crop industry, which includes:

- Waiving matching funds requirement for the Specialty Crop Research Initiative
- Increasing funding for the Specialty Crop Mechanization and Automation Research and Extension Program
- Expanding crop insurance access
- Expanding markets for the distribution of fresh, fresh frozen, and other nutritious foods
- Increasing funding for the Market Access Program (MAP) and Foreign Market Development Program (FMD)
- Requiring a report be conducted on the competitiveness of U.S. specialty crop exports
- Requiring the establishment of an interagency working group to monitor seasonal and perishable fruits and vegetables trade data

Continued on Page 22, See Update



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Update, Continued from Page 20

- Reauthorizing key specialty crop nutrition programs

- Expanding farm ownership and operating loans

The Agricultural Act of 2026 bill text is expected to soon be considered by the U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee.

Agricultural Economic Assistance Included in President Trump's Supplemental Proposal

On June 24th, President Donald Trump submitted to Congress a supplemental funding package for agricultural economic assistance. The supplemental proposal contains \$10 billion in temporary economic assistance for row and specialty crops planted in crop year 2026, and \$1.1 billion for agricultural producers who faced damages from winter storms that occurred in late 2025 and early 2026.

The U.S. House and Senate Appropriations Committees will now review the proposal and determine a package to be offered for congressional approval.

Senator Tedd Budd Introduces Legislation to Reform H-2A Requirements

U.S. Senator Budd (R-NC) introduced S. 4249, the Farmworker Access and Retention Modernization (FARM) Stability Act on March 26, in an effort to reform H-2A program requirements. The bill has eight co-sponsors including Senate Agriculture Committee Chair John Boozman (R-AR).

The FARM Stability Act would direct the Secretary of Labor to establish separate annual wage rates for entry-level and experienced H-2A workers, with higher wages for those with more experience. It also calls for a compensation adjustment factor to reflect the value of employer-provided housing, based on the weighted statewide average fair market rent for a four-bedroom unit. This adjustment may not exceed 30 percent of the state's total wage rate. Overall, the legislation aims to ensure compensation more accurately reflects both worker experience and housing benefits. 🍌



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Current Situation on Pecan Bacterial Leaf Scorch - an Insect Transmitted Disease in Pecan

By Dr. Vishal Patil, Postdoctoral Research Associate, University of Georgia
Dr. Apurba Barman, Assistant Professor, University of Georgia

Georgia pecan growers routinely manage a wide range of diseases and insect pests that can impact tree health and productivity. These include pecan scab, insect pests and nutrient-related disorders. Another disease that has gained attention in recent years is pecan bacterial leaf scorch (PBLs), a disease associated with the bacterium *Xylella fastidiosa* subsp. *Multiplex* (*Xfm*).

Unlike many other pecan diseases which spread through wind, rain or plant debris, PBLs transmission involves a complex interaction between the bacterium, the pecan tree and the insect vectors. Some studies from New Mexico and Texas also reported seed and graft wood-mediated transmission of *Xylella*. The bacterium lives inside the xylem vessels -- the water conducting tissues of the tree. As these bacteria multiply inside these vessels, they form biofilm -- a slimy layer that can block the water movement and limit the dissolved nutrients supply to the different parts of the tree. This gradual blockage results in leaf scorch symptoms and, in some cases, gradual decline of affected trees. The impact of PBLs in pecan orchards can be devastating, as it grows silently along the developing orchards. In severe cases complete orchards are destroyed due to PBLs.

Xylella fastidiosa has been detected in Georgia pecan orchards for a long time. In 2000, the Pecan Grower published the first report of PBLs in Cape Fear cultivated in Georgia. 18 years later, Dr. Bock and his team reported endemic nature of PBLs supported by evidence based on DNA sequencing methods. However, many questions remain regarding the distribution of the pathogen, differences among pecan cultivars, and the insect species responsible for transmission under Georgia growing conditions. Additionally, there is currently no reliable treatment available to eliminate *Xylella fastidiosa* from infected trees.

To address these questions, ongoing research at UGA is focused on improving our understanding of disease biology, insect transmission and host plant inter-

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actions through advanced molecular techniques and field experiments to develop detection and management strategies for PBLS.

Unlike other pecan diseases, PBLS symptoms often develop gradually and sometimes even take several years to exhibit fully in the pecan canopy. Generally, symptoms begin in late spring to mid-summer and typically appear as marginal leaf scorch, tanning or browning along leaf margin and spreading inward toward the midrib (**Figure 1**). Eventually the browning or scorching



Figure 1. Pecan bacterial leaf scorch symptom on individual leaf (left) and terminal die back symptom on individual leaf (right).

expands to the whole leaf leading to premature leaf drop, which is visible by reduced canopy density and gradual tree decline. The diseased trees also seem to produce fewer nuts and compromised nut quality.

One of the challenges with PBLS is that these symptoms are often confused with similar leaf scorch resulting from drought stress, nutrient imbalances or other diseases. For example, *Neofusicoccum caryigenum*, a fungal pathogen associated with pecan leaf and terminal dieback, can produce leaf scorching and browning that may resemble PBLS. But there are some differences in symptom development that can be helpful to visually differentiate between bacterial leaf scorch and the terminal die back disease. Terminal die back caused by *Neofusicoccum* is often recognized as whole-leaf death

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and kills the entire twig leading to dead patches and visible die-back of twigs. Those dead terminals are often visible from a distance (**Figure 2**).



Fig. 2. Symptoms of pecan bacterial leaf scorch (left) and terminal die back (right).

However, *Xylella* causes leaves to exhibit marginal scorching starting from the tip and affects single limbs or the entire tree but typically does not cause the twigs/branches themselves to die back or turn black. Nonetheless, these conditions can appear similar in the field and visual symptoms alone are not often sufficient to diagnose PBLS. Molecular diagnostic tools such as quantitative PCR (qPCR) allow us to detect *Xylella* directly from leaf tissues and distinguish PBLS from other leaf scorch symptoms.

One of the objectives of our research at the Barman lab at UGA Tifton is to determine the extent of PBLS spread in Georgia pecan orchards. In 2025, we collected pecan leaf samples from commercial pecan orchards in Dougherty, Lee and Berrien counties, as well as research fields at the UGA Ponder Farm in Tift County. Several commercially important cultivars were tested

for the presence of *Xylella fastidiosa* using highly sensitive quantitative PCR (qPCR)-based assay.

Xfm was positively detected in symptomatic trees of several cultivars, including Byrd, Cape Fear, Excel, Lakota, Mandan and Ellis. In contrast, samples collected from cultivars such as Elliott and Creek tested negative during this study (**Table 1**).

It is important to note that the detection of *Xfm* in a cultivar simply indicates presence of bacterium in the tested leaves from that tree. It does not mean that the cultivar is more susceptible to PBLS. Likewise, a negative result does not necessarily indicate that a cultivar is resistant or tolerant. For example, we did not detect the bacteria in ‘Elliott’ even though it was planted next to an infected ‘Byrd’ tree. This observation highlights the need for additional studies involving more trees, locations and repeated sampling during several years to understand the distribution of bacteria and the varietal response.

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Table 1. Pecan cultivars from different orchards tested for the presence of PBLs

Orchard	County	Cultivars Tested	Positive Cultivars
Orchard 1	Dougherty	Excel, Lakota, Mandan	Excel, Mandan
Orchard 2	Dougherty	Byrd, Elliott	Byrd
Orchard 3	Dougherty	Creek, Excel, Cape Fear, Byrd, Lakota, Ellis	Excel, Cape Fear, Byrd, Lakota, Ellis
Orchard 4	Tift	Lakota	Lakota
Orchard 5	Berrien	Cape Fear, Creek	Cape Fear
Orchard 6	Lee	Cape Fear, Excel	Cape Fear, Excel
Orchard 7	Lee	Byrd, Cape Fear	Cape Fear

Understanding the role of insect vectors in spreading *Xylella*

One of the important aspects of *Xylella* transmission is that it depends on xylem feeding insects for movement between plants. These xylem feeding insects use specialized needle-like mouth parts to access their food from the water transporting tissues of the tree and acquire the bacterium while feeding on infected trees. When they feed on a healthy tree later, they introduce the bacterium into the xylem, where it can establish and multiply.

from other sap sucking insect such as aphids or white-flies, which feed primarily on phloem and are not involved in *Xylella* transmission. Among these, Sharpshooters (Cicadellidae family) are considered highly efficient vectors due to their voracious feeding behavior and high mobility across plant hosts. Spittlebugs (Cercopidae family) are also of interest because many species are common in grass-covered areas and cover crops and may interact with multiple plant hosts.

Several groups of insects are known to transmit *Xylella* in pecan and other cropping systems such as sharpshooters, spittlebugs and other treehoppers. These insects differ

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In pecan, spittlebug (*Clastoptera achatina*), the Johnson-grass sharpshooter (*Homalodisca insolita*) and the glassy-winged sharpshooter (GWSS; *Homalodisca vitripennis*) have been identified as the potential vectors of *Xylella* in other states. However, several xylem-feeding insects occur in and

around Georgia pecan orchards, their role in transmitting PBLS under Georgia conditions is still being investigated.

The Barman lab at UGA is conducting several field experiments coupled with advanced molecular diagnostics to understand the role of these potential vectors in transmitting *Xylella*. As insect transmission is central to the development of PBLS, our major objective is to better understand the xylem-feeding insects in Georgia pecan orchards.



Figure 3. Spittlebugs and sharpshooters from pecan orchards. a. adult spittlebug, b. spittlebug nymphs surrounded by spit-like substances known as "cuckoo spit", c. spittlebug nymphs around developing pecan nuts, d. Johnsongrass sharpshooter, e. Glassy-winged sharpshooter (Picture credits- Dr. Rajendra Acharya, UGA)

Current studies involve evaluation of different colored sticky traps to effectively monitor potential vector species and study their seasonal dynamics and species-

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level diversity. Through these studies, we have identified multiple species of sharpshooters in experimental orchards (**Figure 3**). Simultaneously, controlled insect-caging experiments are being conducted to determine whether selected species can acquire *Xylella* from infected trees and will be subsequently tested for their transmission abilities.

What does this mean for growers?

There is no known chemical which can control or kill the pathogen in an infected tree. Controlling the insect population which are the primary vector could effectively manage the spread of *Xylella*. Although there are many other questions about PBLs that remain unanswered, growers can take several practical steps to monitor and control PBLs in their orchards-

- Monitor orchards regularly for unusual leaf scorch, canopy decline, or premature defoliation and try to distinguish PBLs from stress-related or fungal scorching symptoms.
- Consider submitting plant samples for laboratory testing to confirm the cause.
- Regularly monitor vector insect populations in the orchards.
- Continue implementing proper irrigation, fertility management, and stress reduction, to maintain overall tree health.
- As research progresses, recommendations for monitoring insect vectors and reducing disease spread will become more refined.

Looking Ahead

Pecan bacterial leaf scorch presents a unique challenge to growers and researchers as it involves the complex interactions between bacterial pathogen, insect vectors and the pecan tree. Considerable knowledge has been gained from studies on *Xylella fastidiosa* in crops such as grape, citrus, and olive, across Europe and the U.S., though many questions remain about how the disease develops and spreads in Georgia pecan orchards.

Dr. Barman and his team at the UGA are trying to answer some of these questions by combining molecular

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tools, field surveys, insect monitoring and transmission experiments. By understanding the disease biology and insects involved in its spread, we hope to develop practical, science-based recommendations that will help growers monitor PBLS more effectively and protect the long-term productivity of Georgia pecan orchards.

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- Keep orchard mowed
- Patch bud
- Apply fungicides at 14 day intervals
- Apply herbicides as needed
- Monitor for pecan weevil and hickory shuckworm
- Keep leaves free of aphids and mites
- Scout and spray as needed for insect pests
- Prepare for Pawnee harvest by mowing, remove debris and service equipment

September

- Prepare for harvest by mowing, remove debris and service equipment
- Harvest Pawnee
- Be sure to maintain adequate soil moisture as nuts fill
- Patch bud
- Keep leaves free of aphids and mites
- Scout for pecan weevil and hickory shuckworm
- Scout and spray as needed for insect pests
- Fungicide sprays may be needed under heavy disease pressure

October

- Prepare for harvest by mowing, remove debris and service equipment
- Make Fall nickel application to severely deficient trees
- Early harvesting may begin
- Nuts may need mechanical drying
- Market crop
- Continue irrigation as needed
- Prepare site for new planting
- Apply herbicide as needed
- Be aware of pre-harvest intervals for all chemicals applied



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Georgia Pecans in the Garden

Featuring Chef Taylor Mead

By Amy Howell, Copy Editor, *The Pecan Grower Magazine* and Guest Writer, Anthony Baisden

The Georgia Pecan Growers Association has proudly cultivated relationships with many of Georgia's most notable and award-winning chefs to promote Georgia pecans and create unique culinary opportunities that showcase the industry.

Last summer, the Association partnered with Chef Taylor Mead, a Georgia Grown Executive Chef and Public Programs Coordinator for the Atlanta Botanical Garden. Through her work at the Garden, Chef Taylor helped bring Georgia pecans to the forefront during one of the Georgia Grown Harvest Day events, which emphasizes the unique farm-to-table opportunities of Georgia products like pecans. Through the event, which she called Plant-to-Plate, she incorporated pecans into a variety of creative dishes prepared in the Garden's Edible Outdoor Kitchen, where she regularly leads chef demonstrations, dinner events, and educational culinary programs.

More recently, Chef Taylor participated in the Association's Spring Event with the Georgia Pecan Chef Innovation Tour in April 2026, where she hosted a delegation of chefs and culinary influencers from India. The tour highlighted the versatility and quality of Georgia pecans while fostering international culinary connections and expanding opportunities for the industry.

"Take opportunities, because maybe there's not a traditional path that you need to follow."

- Chef Taylor

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The Pecan Grower magazine was thrilled to have our own conversation with Chef Taylor Mead, a South Georgia native from Thomasville, to discuss her culinary journey, her passion for connecting food and nature, and her appreciation for Georgia pecans. Largely self-taught, Chef Taylor has built her career on creativity, curiosity, and a deep respect for fresh, locally grown ingredients.

TPG: How did you first become interested in cooking and pursuing a career as a chef?

TM: People joke and say are you a Disney kid, or a Nickelodeon kid, but I'm absolutely a Food Network kid. My own interest really got me into it, and I like to nurture myself in that way because it's like a peaceful time in the kitchen. You also get to eat something delicious, but when I started cooking for other people, I guess that's when I decided to start being a chef.

TPG: Who inspires you as a chef?

TM: My homesteading great grandmother, who was born in the early 1900s in Oklahoma, at six years old she was in the kitchen with her mom, cooking food for all the workers on their homestead, and so it's just part of me. It's in all of us, as humans, that we have survived all this time because people have been doing this hard work labor of feeding us, so it's just not an option for me.

TPG: What are some of your favorite pecan dishes to put on your menus?

TM: I would say that something I love seeing on the menu and making is a romesco sauce. It's a Spanish roasted red pepper sauce, and it's typically made with almonds. However, I substitute the almond for pecan just to give it a deeper nuttier taste.

TPG: How do you make Georgia pecans stand out to home cooks and professional chefs alike?

TM: We were showing it [pecan/pecan products] to guests, like look, it can be made into oil, you can dry roast them with a seasoning and it gets a nice texture. Last year, we had a barbecue guy out, and he was able to make pecan smoked wood chicken. So, besides the nut within the pecan, the tree itself can be used in different ways.

[During the Georgia Harvest Day event] ...We had different sampling stations, we had trivia, we had different stations with volunteers who were greeting guests, giving out pecan ice cream, giving out pecan sandies, pecan coffee, and basically every format of pecans that you could find was there.

TPG: How do you think your chef journey can influence others?

TM: Take opportunities, because maybe there's not a traditional path that you need to follow. So, pursue something with passion and be stubborn. Don't take no, especially if you really care. But, if it's a no now then maybe you pivot a little bit, and it's a yes somewhere better. 🥜

Upcoming Event

October 3 • Atlanta Botanical Gardens

Join Chef Taylor for Georgia Grown Harvest Day at the Garden's Edible Outdoor Kitchen, where she'll present seasonal culinary demonstrations celebrating the exceptional flavor and versatility of Georgia-grown pecans and peanuts!



Take Advantage of APPB's and APC's Industry Resources



By Anne Warden, CEO of American Pecan Council & American Pecan Promotion Board

Success in today's market depends not only on growing a great product, but also on having access to agricultural research, timely crop information, marketing resources and trainings that can help support smarter business and marketing decisions. Providing access to these offerings is a big part of the mission of the American Pecan Council (APC) and the American Pecan Promotion Board (APPB). Throughout the year, your staff has ensured a steady pipeline of resources at your fingertips on both AmericanPecan.com and EatPecans.com.

Here are just a few that have been rolled out over the past three months:

Monthly Market Analysis Reports – These reports are prepared by an independent agricultural economist that uses latest APC handler data, USDA statistics, and international trade information to provide a holistic picture of current pecan market conditions. Find them on AmericanPecan.com.

The Growers Toolkit – Now available in the AmericanPecan.com resource center, the toolkit aggregates from across the industry, the latest agricultural research and resources available and divides resources by East and West. It also has several filters to easily find what you're looking for.

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Quarterly MRL Reports – As pecans expand into new export markets, there's a need to adapt to changing food regulations, especially since there are numerous MRLs and contaminants proposed, revised, and changed each year. APC's quarterly MRL report, available on AmericanPecan.com summarizes potential changes to MRLs for pesticides and contaminant substances used in pecan production and processing across major export markets.

Food Service Bootcamp – In July, the American Pecan Promotion Board invited interested industry to participate in day-long training around the food service space. The camp shares an overview of the food service industry today, how to sell into food service, how best to partner with operators and give advice on tools for food service success.

eCommerce Photoshoot – To help growers and brands elevate their ecommerce presence, APPB held a

free photoshoot to capture high-quality images of packaged product that can be used on ecommerce platforms, your website and your company's marketing materials.

GLP-1 and Pecans Fact Sheet – As GLP-1 medication becomes more prevalent, eating behaviors have begun to change. Pecans can be an excellent complement to a specialty diet, so APPB has created a new fact sheet to help dietitians and consumers understand how pecans can be deliciously incorporated into special diets. You can find that fact sheet and many others about nutrition in the resource section of EatPecans.com.

If this is the first time you're hearing about these materials and offerings, please be sure to sign up for our industry newsletter – The Pecan Pulse. You can do that by visiting AmericanPecan.com or EatPecans.com and fill in the fields. Or, send us an email at industry@eat-pecans.com and we'll get you signed up! 🌰



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¹APC FY25 Budget.

²Proprietary data from retailers obtained by SS Associates India, based on the FY25 fiscal year (Oct. 2024-September 2025).

³Proprietary data obtained by The Garden Marketing & PR, based on the FY25 fiscal year (Oct. 2024-September 2025).

⁴Proprietary data obtained by The Garden Marketing & PR, based on sampling programs held from June-September 2025 across 599 stores.



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On the Road with GPGA

By Mary Mikelyn Bruorton, Editor, *The Pecan Grower Magazine* and
Scout Weesner, GPGA Communications & Events Coordinator

East Georgia Field Day

By Scout Weesner

On Wednesday, May 20th the 6th Annual East Georgia Pecan Field Day was held at Ben Menthei's orchard in Jefferson County, bringing together growers, industry experts and agricultural professionals for a day of education and discussion focused on current production practices and emerging research.

Throughout the day, attendees toured the orchard by tram while participating in educational presentations covering a wide range of topics important to pecan production. Host grower Ben Menthei discussed his fungicide program and management practices in the seven-year-old orchard before attendees stopped to observe. Dr. Johanna Wesche, a post-doctoral researcher with the University of Georgia working under Dr. Clemen Oliveira, followed with a presentation on pecan scab fungicide sensitivity, discussing current sensitivity profiles and the fungicide sensitivity testing available through the UGA Department of Plant Pathology. Dr. Apurba Barman then demonstrated integrated pest management strategies and discussed how growers can incorporate monitoring and informed management decisions into their production programs.

At the next stop, Burke County Extension Agent Cliff Collins presented results from pre-emergent herbicide trials for newly established orchards, highlighting economical weed management options for young trees. Southeast Area Pecan Agent Andrew Sawyer continued the program with a discussion on the economics of pecan production, emphasizing orchard spacing, hedging practices and their impact on long-term profitability.

At lunch attendees heard from Bailey Segars, Industry Relations Manager with the American Pecan Council and the American Pecan Promotion Board and Scout Weesner of the Georgia Pecan Growers Association.



Both shared insight into the organizations they represent and the key roles they play in the pecan industry. Scout gave updates on recent GPGA activities,

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such as attending the National Pecan Federation's Washington D.C. Fly-In in April and hosting eight food influencers from India to showcase the versatility of pecans and expand international markets.

Overall, the East Georgia Field Day was a success, giving opportunities to combine education, collaboration, and hands-on learning. Events like this continue to strengthen Georgia's pecan industry by providing growers with the latest research, practical production recommendations and valuable opportunities to collaborate with fellow growers and agricultural professionals. The continued support and participation of everyone involved reflects the shared commitment to advancing Georgia's pecan-growing community. 🥜

Oklahoma Pecan Growers Association's 100th Annual Conference

By Mary Mikelyn Bruorton

The 100th Annual Oklahoma Pecan Growers Association (OPGA) Conference marked a historic milestone as growers, researchers and industry partners gathered June 4th through 6th at Savage Equipment in Madill, Oklahoma to celebrate a century of education, innovation and collaboration.

Hosted at one of the pecan industry's leading equipment manufacturers, the conference brought together producers from across the region for two days of educational sessions, networking and hands-on learning.



Attendees toured the Savage Equipment facility, explored the latest advancements in harvesting and processing technology and visited with exhibitors showcasing products and services that support today's pecan growers.

Educational sessions featured Oklahoma State University Extension specialists and industry experts discussing timely topics including irrigation management, insect and disease control, orchard profitability, succession planning and emerging research. The conference also included the annual trade show, Pecan Show, and Pecan Food Show, which highlighted Oklahoma-grown pecans.

One of the conference's highlights was the centennial awards luncheon, where attendees reflected on the Oklahoma Pecan Growers Association's 100-year legacy of supporting producers through research, education and advocacy. The event celebrated not only the organization's rich history but also the relationships that continue to strengthen the pecan industry.

During the Awards Luncheon, OPGA President Jon Vantrease recognized several individuals and operations for their outstanding contributions to the Oklahoma pecan industry. Becky Carroll was honored with a commemorative plaque in recognition of her 38 years of dedicated research and Extension service, as well as her upcoming retirement. The Association also presented its



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annual prestigious industry awards. This year's honorees included **Louis Morton**, Grower of the Year; **Kenneth Watkins**, recipient of the Herman Hinrichs Award; and **Knight Creek Farms**, named Orchard of the Year.

The conference concluded with a field day at Hauani Creek Pecan Company, where participants observed orchard management practices and equipment demonstrations firsthand.

As the Oklahoma Pecan Growers Association begins its second century, the conference served as a reminder that the industry's success is rooted in collaboration, innovation, and a shared commitment to helping growers thrive for generations to come. 🌰



Texas Pecan Growers Association's 105th Annual Conference and Trade Show

By Mary Mikelyn Bruorton

The Texas Pecan Growers Association's 105th Annual Conference and Trade Show brought pecan growers and industry professionals together on July 12–15 in San Marcos, Texas, for several days of education, fellowship and a celebration of the pecan industry.

Held at the Embassy Suites by Hilton San Marcos Hotel & Conference Center, the conference provided attendees with a full schedule of educational sessions, industry discussions, demonstrations and opportunities to connect with fellow growers from across Texas and beyond.

One of the highlights of the conference was the opportunity to spend time with growers and industry members who share many of the same challenges and opportunities as pecan producers throughout the Southeast. From orchard management and pest control to research, marketing and industry advocacy, the

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conversations throughout the week reinforced the importance of growers working together to strengthen the pecan industry.

The conference officially kicked off with a welcome reception and trade show, where attendees had the opportunity to visit with exhibitors and learn about the latest products, services and technologies available to support pecan operations. The event also featured the State of Texas Pecan Show, cooking and grafting demonstrations, and the first ever “Shell-of-a-Time” cracking competition.

Educational sessions throughout the conference covered a wide range of topics important to pecan growers. Speakers discussed production practices, pest management, research, market conditions and other issues impacting the industry. The conference also provided opportunities for growers to connect with representatives from the USDA Farm Service Agency and Natural Resources Conservation Service to learn more about available programs and resources.

Beyond the educational program, the conference offered plenty of opportunities for fellowship. Casino Night and Pecan Cluster Family Night provided attendees with time to relax and enjoy one another’s company outside of the meeting room. These informal conversations are often one of the most valuable parts of any industry gathering, allowing growers to share experiences, compare challenges and build relationships that continue long after the conference concludes.

During the TPGA and Texas Pecan Board (TPB) board meetings, President Troy Swift and Executive Direc-



tor Blair Krebs presented three prestigious awards recognizing outstanding contributions to the Texas pecan industry.

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The TPGA Small Grower of the Year Award was presented posthumously to the late John Abraham. His wife, Bertha Abraham, and family accepted the award on his behalf. The TPGA Large Grower of the Year Award was presented to Benito Fernandez, while Dr. Young Ki Jo was recognized as the TPGA Extension Professional of the Year.

The TPGA conference was a great opportunity to spend time with members of the Texas pecan industry and experience the strong sense of community that continues to make this industry special. We look forward to continuing to build relationships and work together to support pecan growers across the country. 🌰



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Pecan Postharvest Quality: Protecting Value After Harvest

By Dr. Xiuxiu Sun, USDA-ARS Fruit and Tree Nut Research Unit, Byron, Georgia

Postharvest management plays a critical role in preserving pecan kernel quality, extending shelf life, and maintaining consumer acceptance. High-quality pecans can lose value if they are not properly handled during harvesting, drying, shelling, packaging, and storage. Understanding the key factors that affect postharvest quality can help growers and processors protect their investment and reduce economic losses.

Harvest and Drying: Early Decisions Affect Final Quality

Pecans are generally harvested from late September through November, depending on cultivar, geographic location, and weather conditions. Harvest timing is important because delays can increase exposure to rain, insects, wildlife damage, and fungal contamination.

Modern pecan production relies heavily on mechanical harvesting systems. Tree shakers are commonly used to remove mature nuts from the trees, after which sweepers collect nuts from the orchard floor. While these systems greatly improve efficiency, the harvest process also introduces potential challenges. Pecans that remain on the ground for extended periods can be exposed to moisture, soil microorganisms, and environmental contaminants that may negatively affect quality and food safety.

Freshly harvested pecans can contain moisture levels as high as 30%, depending on weather conditions and maturity. High moisture creates favorable conditions for mold growth and quality deterioration. Fungal organisms such as *Aspergillus* and *Penicillium* can develop under warm and humid conditions. These fungi may reduce kernel quality and, in some cases, create food safety concerns. Because of these risks, drying is considered one of the most important postharvest steps.

The goal of drying is to reduce moisture to a level that allows nuts to be stored safely while minimizing quality loss. For long-term storage, kernel moisture is typically reduced to approximately 4–4.5%.

Drying methods can influence final quality. Traditional sun drying may work under favorable environmental conditions, but weather variability can lead to inconsistent results. Forced-air drying systems often provide better control over temperature and airflow, resulting in more uniform moisture reduction. These systems may also reduce exposure to dust, insects, and environmental contamination. Improper drying can create several problems. Under-drying results in excess moisture that promotes microbial growth, while excessive drying may negatively affect texture and increase kernel breakage during processing. Achieving proper moisture balance is therefore essential for maintaining quality.

Cleaning and Shelling Operations

After drying, harvested pecans must be cleaned before additional processing steps occur. Leaves, twigs, shucks, stones, soil, and other debris frequently accompany nuts during harvest and must be removed. Cleaning systems commonly use air separation, vibrating screens, and mechanical sorting equipment to eliminate unwanted materials. Effective cleaning improves prod-

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uct appearance and helps prevent equipment damage during shelling operations.

Shelling is another important step in the postharvest process because kernel appearance significantly influences market value. Intact kernel halves generally command higher prices than broken kernel pieces. Before shelling, pecans are often conditioned by increasing moisture slightly. This controlled adjustment in moisture content helps soften shells and improve separation efficiency during cracking operations. Proper conditioning can reduce mechanical damage and increase the percentage of intact kernels.

Mechanical shelling equipment separates shells from kernels using differences in size, density, and air-flow characteristics. Efficient shelling requires careful adjustment because excessive force can damage kernels, while insufficient force may leave shell fragments attached. Maintaining proper shelling conditions helps improve processing efficiency and product quality.

Food Safety Remains a Critical Concern

Food safety has become increasingly important throughout the food industry, including tree nuts. Since pecans are harvested directly from the orchard floor, they can be exposed to various microorganisms from soil, water, wildlife, and environmental sources. Microorganisms such as Salmonella and Escherichia coli may become concerns if sanitation practices are inadequate. Although nuts generally have lower water activity than many fresh produce items, pathogens can survive under dry conditions for extended periods.

Good sanitation practices throughout the supply chain help reduce contamination risks. Equipment cleanliness, employee hygiene, and proper handling procedures all contribute to maintaining food safety. Processors also use intervention strategies designed to reduce microbial populations. Thermal treatments such as hot water and steam applications have shown effectiveness in lowering microbial contamination levels. These treatments can reduce pathogens while maintaining acceptable product quality.

Researchers continue to investigate alternative technologies that may provide additional options for food safety management. Emerging approaches include intense pulsed light, ultraviolet treatments, and cold plasma technologies. These methods may help improve microbial control while minimizing impacts on flavor, texture, and nutritional quality. As consumer expectations and regulatory requirements continue to evolve, food safety will remain an important component of pecan postharvest management.

Roasting and Flavor Development

Roasting is commonly used to enhance flavor and improve consumer desire for pecan products. Heating produces complex chemical reactions that generate the characteristic aroma and flavor associated with roasted nuts.

Moderate roasting conditions can improve sensory quality by increasing desirable flavor compounds and reducing undesirable characteristics. However, roasting

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conditions must be carefully controlled because excessive temperatures or prolonged heating can negatively affect quality. Over-roasting may create bitter flavors, burnt aromas, and darker color development that reduce consumer acceptance. Excessive heating can also contribute to nutrient loss and undesirable chemical changes.

Researchers continue to study optimal roasting conditions that maximize flavor development while maintaining nutritional properties and product quality. Understanding these relationships can help processors produce more consistent and appealing products.

Packaging and Storage: Protecting Quality Over Time

Maintaining pecan quality during storage presents unique challenges because pecans contain relatively high levels of unsaturated oils. While these oils contribute desirable flavor and nutritional value, they are also susceptible to oxidation. Lipid oxidation is one of the primary causes of quality deterioration during storage. Oxidation can lead to rancidity, off-flavors, and reduced consumer acceptance. Exposure to oxygen, moisture, heat, and light can accelerate these changes.

Packaging therefore plays a major role in preserving quality. Vacuum packaging can remove oxygen and slow oxidation reactions. Oxygen-barrier materials and metal laminate packaging systems may also help protect products during long-term storage. Nitrogen flushing has become another useful approach for maintaining quality. Replacing oxygen with nitrogen inside packages can reduce oxidation and help preserve flavor and texture characteristics. Controlled atmosphere storage systems have also shown potential for improving long-term storage outcomes. Elevated carbon dioxide concentrations may help reduce quality deterioration and slow the formation of compounds associated with rancid flavors.

Researchers are also investigating newer technologies for quality preservation. Plant-based edible coatings may provide protective barriers that reduce

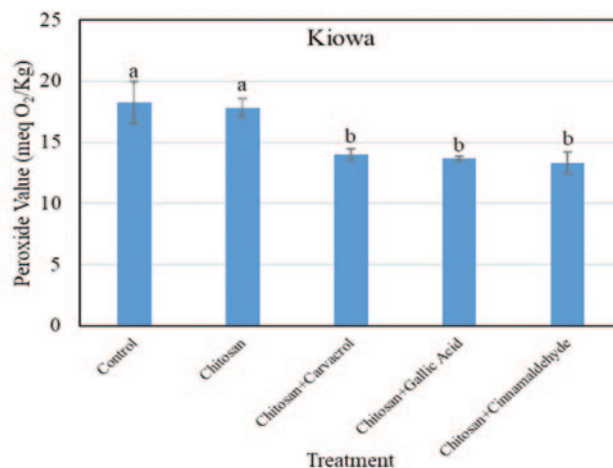


Figure 1. The impact of chitosan-based coatings on peroxide value of Kiowa pecans

moisture loss and oxidation (Figure 1). Postharvest treatments such as 1-methylcyclopropene (1-MCP) are being studied for their potential to reduce physiological changes and maintain quality during storage.

Looking Ahead

Postharvest handling directly affects the final quality, safety, and value of pecans. Decisions made after harvest can significantly influence marketability and profitability. Rapid drying, proper cleaning, effective sanitation practices, careful shelling, and appropriate packaging all contribute to maintaining product quality. Traditional management practices remain important, but emerging technologies may provide additional tools for preserving quality and reducing losses. As consumer demand for premium-quality pecans continues to grow, continued improvements in postharvest handling and storage practices will help growers and processors remain competitive. Protecting quality after harvest is ultimately about protecting value. The effort invested throughout the growing season can only achieve its full return when pecans reach consumers with their flavor, safety, and quality intact. As consumer demand for high-quality pecans continues to grow, continued improvements in postharvest handling and storage practices will help growers and processors remain competitive while delivering a safe and high-quality product to the marketplace. 🌰

Georgia Pecan Growers Association

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Thursday, September 3, 2026
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