

Pecans

Pecan, the state tree of Texas, is a fairly easy-to-grow nut that makes a great shade tree. For best production, choose our grafted varieties, as listed below. Seedling pecans (non-grafted) make good yard trees, but take much longer to begin producing nuts with unpredictable quality. All of our pecans are papershell varieties. Pecans must grow in well-drained, fertile soil with a *minimum depth of 3 feet*. Pecans can live in shallower soil, but will require considerably more water and will bear crops inconsistently. Water deeply as needed, especially in late summer to promote healthy flower buds. Space trees at least 35 feet apart, and 20 feet from buildings or driveways.

Training young pecan trees using the central leader system makes them more productive and vigorous. **At planting:** Cut the tall central stem back by one-third to one-half. This should result in a tree 36” - 42” tall. Remove the second strongest shoot, if present and tip prune any other shoots.

2nd and Subsequent Winters: Prune the central stem back by one-third to one-half of *the previous year’s growth*. Again, remove the second strongest shoot. Tip prune four to six lateral branches that are evenly spaced around the tree. After four or five years of this training, there is little need to prune pecan trees. For more detailed pruning information, consult a reputable, current book or university website.

For best production and health, maintain a three inch layer of *mulch* under the pecans and apply good quality manure compost annually. Young trees need frequent, small applications of nitrogen from bud break in April until early June. Mature, bearing trees should receive nitrogen fertilizer in April, May, and June. If it is a year of heavy production, additional fertilizer applications are helpful in July and August, but only on mature trees. Use a quality, *high-nitrogen organic fertilizer*.

Pecans may need regular *foliar* application of **Zinc** for best results. Soil applications are not usually effective. Severe zinc deficiency shows up as rosetting, where the new leaves grow very close to each other, resembling a rose. In highly alkaline soil zinc along with other nutrients are harder to absorb. Acidifying the soil can help increase zinc uptake.

Pecans produce separate female and male flowers on the same tree. They bloom at different times so that there is a greater chance of cross pollination rather than self pollination. *Protandrous* means the male flower blooms first before the female flower is receptive; *Protogynous* means that the female flower becomes receptive first before the male blooms. This is more important to pecan growers than to homeowners. A neighbor’s pecan tree within ¼ mile is usually sufficient regardless of type. To ensure good production plant Kanza with another variety to increase crosspollination.

Pecan Varieties for Central Texas (protandrous or protogynous) – Size of pecan; Quality; Time to bearing; Ripening time; Productivity; Disease or pest resistance; Other information.

Caddo (Protandrous) – Very small; High quality nut; 5 – 6 years; Mid-Season; Highly productive and bears well annually; Scab resistant; Excellent yard tree because of strong limbs and attractive foliage.

Desirable (Protandrous) – Large (over one inch long); High quality nut; 8 – 10 years; Late mid-season; Consistent, moderate production, but as an older tree it is the most regular producer; Moderate resistance to scab; Large tree with light green foliage. *Best single tree to have, most self-fertile variety.*

Kanza (Protogynous) – Small; High quality nut; 7 – 9 years; Early; Good consistent yields; Low susceptibility to scab; Tough and consistent producer. *Best tree to add for increased production/ crosspollination.*

Oconee (Protandrous) Large; High quality nut; 5 years; Early; Consistent production; Moderate scab resistance, fair resistance to downy spot and vein spot.

Pawnee (Protandrous) – Medium to large; Good quality nut; 5 – 8 years; Very early; Tends to bear biennially; Very resistant to yellow aphids and moderate susceptibility to scab; Smaller, strong, vigorous tree.