



North Carolina Pecan Growers Association

Nutty News

Late Winter/ Spring Edition

February 2007

Hope Springs Eternal !



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For any fortunate enough to have an interest in and be involved with growing pecans, we're indeed blessed in many ways. As this newsletter begins to take shape on a 17 degree morning, looking forward to seeing pecan trees begin bud break and catkins begin to explode is the stuff needed to hang in there a few more weeks. Even though we've yet to see a single digit degree morning, we have seen enough in the teens and low twenty's to declare the winter is done with, lets hope.

If there's truth in harsh winters helping to control insect and disease pests, surely that threshold has been met. And, for those holding firm that frequent soil freezing and thawing is a good thing, that has been met in Nash County.

Does this winters weather conditions bode well for the 2007 crop?

It certainly does not suggest any adverse effects. Following the 2006 light pecan crop, the trees should be ready for a significantly stronger crop. They do need help, however. There's nothing we can do now to stimulate strong catkin development and weather during the pollinating season beginning late April. But, what we do now through lime and fertilizer will boost the tree and help to retain the crop it sets and see that crop well into the summer. Second applications of fertilizer mid to late June may be wise, depending on the crop set at that time.

Join us for the annual workshop on March 24 to talk more about pecans. (more inside)



Pecan Pita Pockets

Recipe from Georgia Pecan Commission (see page 6)

**Spring Workshop
March 24, 2007**

**Johnston County
Agriculture Extension
Office, Smithfield NC**

Registration 8:00 AM

**For more information:
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Spring Workshop Scheduled for March 24, 2007

Now that it's about time to stretch out and get back in the orchards / fields, come join others at the Johnston County Agricultural Center in Smithfield on March 24 for the Association's 13th annual educational workshop. The Agricultural Center is located on Hwy 210 West about a couple miles from downtown Smithfield.

The attached agenda reports that registration begins at 8:00 and the program at 9:00. Also noticeable on the agenda is that Extension Personnel, NC State University Horticulturists or NCPGA members will make all presentations. It is indeed a program for local

pecan growers/enthusiasts provided by local pecan specialists whose hands have been dirty from hands-on opportunities.

Exhibitors are being solicited and space will be provided for display of pecan related information.

The daylong program will conclude at Woodard's Pecan Nursery located six miles east of Smithfield. Alton Woodard has a large number of older pecan trees surrounding his nursery from which he sells bare-rooted pecan trees, along with a variety of other nursery stock. The demonstration orchard provides the hands-on

opportunity related to issues talked about in the classroom. The modest registration cost of \$15.00 will cover a catered mid-day lunch. The general public is invited.

Membership is not required. This will be an opportunity to join the Association and become actively involved with other NC pecan growers and growers from bordering states. For more information please phone or email:

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2007 Farm Show

Though slowed by inclement weather on one of the three scheduled days, the Association provided a staffed educational booth. During the two days staff was provided there was little time to drift off to other displays for Chris Lupton, Gaylon Ambrose, Laurie Wood nor myself. Prior years guided the Association to prepare printed handouts addressing targeted issues about pecan growing which were distributed by the hundreds. The primary questions this year were:

- 1) why we didn't have pecans last year and what to expect this year, and
- 2) We've got these huge trees which have stopped bearing, why?

Though tiring, especially for those of few words, the Farm Show was a very good place for the Association to be. Our presence and willingness to share insights has made inroads to dispelling of some of the old myths related to growing pecans. Yet they continue to exist and as long as they do, NC Pecan Grower's Association's mission continues.



Gaylon Ambrose, NCPGA Director, working at the 2007 Farm Show Booth in Raleigh

Timely To-Do List

- **Make plans to be at NCPGA Spring Workshop**
- **Properly store carryover pecans**
- **Take soil samples prior to fertilizing**
- **Apply lime and fertilizer as recommended**
- **Prune while trees are dormant**
- **Gather and properly store graft wood**
- **Finish planting bare-rooted pecan trees**
- **Clean and put away harvesting equipment**
- **Plan attack for early season sprays**

Early Scab Alert

We will be talking much more in depth about pecan scab at the March 24 workshop. The need was felt to call attention to scab for the benefit of those not able to attend the workshop. Scab is one of those things that if you see it, you're too late to do much about it. It is virtually impossible to eliminate nut-scab as seen in the related picture, one can only hope to arrest it. Leaf scab, in the most severe case, can defoliate the tree resulting in inferior nut-fill and following year crop. An absolute or two about scab are 1) scab over-winters in trees and debris on orchard floor, 2) young tender leaves are more susceptible to scabbing, and 3) young nutlets are most susceptible when young and worsen as they mature.

With that knowledge, it is felt that preventative sprays are needed. The first spray is called for just prior to leaf formation which allows for good soaking of the woody parts of the tree. The second application would be very soon after bud break while leaves are young and tender, a point that scab most favors.

Like the pecan weevil, scab will never be eliminated, it's in the air we breathe. With timely management, we can learn to live with it and minimize its impact. Some fungicides locally available and labeled for scab are Enable, Abound, Stratego, etc.



Severe nut scab. At this point, it's too late. Infestation began when crop was in nutlett stage.



Pecan Scab lesions on full-grown leaf. While this extent is not severe, it is not a healthy and fully functioning leaf.

Membership Renewal Time

A week or so ago, membership renewal notices were mailed. There has been very encouraging responses and we are grateful for that. It is only through active membership that the Association can continue functioning and providing the level of educational opportunities the membership has come to expect. It is through this activity that Association officers continue to be motivated and committed to its charge. Please allow this to remind those who've yet to respond to move this a bit higher on the list of priorities. Also, to encourage you to invite others to join the Association. We are fully aware there are many hundreds of acres of pecan trees whose owners are not a member. The Association needs their membership and the wisdom they will bring.

Second Annual Orchard Tour to be Held in 2007

We want to call attention to this orchard tour, even though exact details are yet to be worked out. Interest is strong to schedule this event nearer to the Association's loyal members in South Carolina. We expect to have details ironed out and will share during the March 24 workshop.

Tour of South Carolina Operations

During the last NCPGA Board meeting, a topic discussed was coordinating a tour of pecan facilities in South Carolina. We have only begun to work on this and further details are yet to be resolved. Hopefully we could visit sizable orchards and a nearby processing facility. We are quite serious about this learning opportunity and want to alert members to that possibility.

Variety Selection

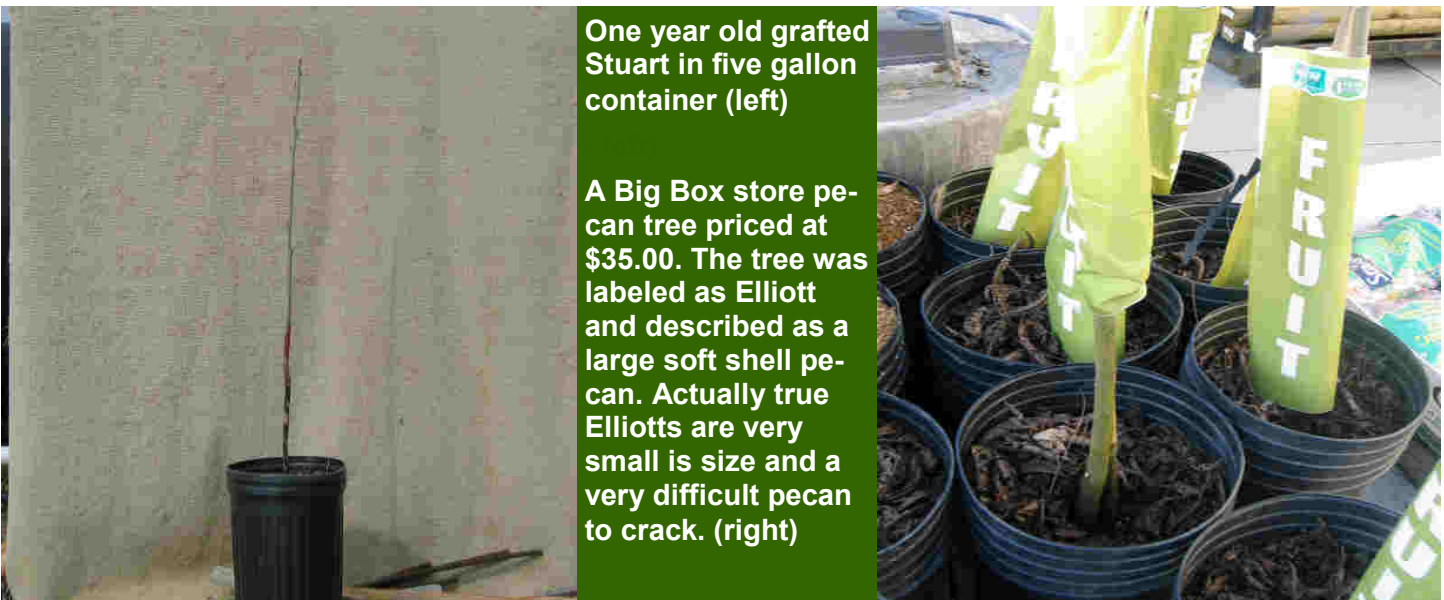
The March 24 workshop will include a few minutes of conversation about varieties and more important will be the opportunity to ask about specific varieties. By then, the planting season will be pretty much over, especially for bare-rooted trees. Hopefully, discussions will help in planning future orchards.

In the meantime, the following word of concern is well timed. Lake View Pecans, a local grower of container-grown pecan trees, had the opportunity to provide some trees to interplant with

recently purchased pecan trees labeled as "Elliott". They were purchased from a local "big box" store. A visit to a local "big box" store, accompanied with the digital camera, yielded the accompanying pictures. It is altogether possible that an Elliott pecan may have produced the tree, but it can be stated without hesitation that the trees we saw are not grafted trees and even though the trees are 7-8 feet of so in height, there are no buds to generate needed lateral growth. From my perspective, the experience worsened when reading the label which described

Elliott as a large, thin shell and easily cracked pecan. An absolute fact and my personal observations are confirmed by the most authoritative pecan sources which state that Elliott are 70 nut count (quite small when compared to Stuart), hard shell and difficult to crack.

Enough said, rather than subject the Association for possible lawsuit for slander, we'll let it all rest here. Lesson learned: know what you're buying and the source from which it came.



One year old grafted Stuart in five gallon container (left)

A Big Box store pecan tree priced at \$35.00. The tree was labeled as Elliott and described as a large soft shell pecan. Actually true Elliotts are very small in size and a very difficult pecan to crack. (right)

Time for Some Humor

- *You know you're a redneck if your view of heaven is to be seated in the third-turn at Daytona Motor Speedway for the 500.*
 - *You know you're redneck if the Call to Worship at your Church is something like "Yaw'll come on in now, its time to start".*
 - *You just might be a redneck if a guy and two females head down the aisles when the pastor calls for bubba to come forward to take collections.*
- Finally:*
- *You are a redneck if you come back from the trash dump with more than you took*

Pecan Crop Revenue Insurance

Following the very disappointing yield during '06, the Association began to aggressively investigate whether NC pecan growers qualified for non-catastrophic insurance.

The State's Farm Service Agency was quite interested in our concern and availed themselves to help in any manner possible. As NCPGA members you may have

been following this concern in the Pecan Grower and Pecan South. It is indeed pleasing to share that the same Pecan Revenue Insurance program available to growers throughout the Southeast is equally available to North Carolina growers. Complete detailed information is available on the web at www.rma@usda.gov. We are calling attention to this very important benefit for commercial growers, and the need

to come up to speed on all aspects of the law. While many North Carolina orchards are young and beginning to come into production, an absolute requirement is a detailed crop history, yields, prices, orchard management practices, etc.

The Association will serve as a conduit for information, but personal investigation focusing on individual orchards is encouraged.

Reinvigorating Older Trees

Question, what is the life of a pecan tree, answer, till the next major hurricane comes through. Actually, pecan trees are long lived; some located further south, have stood and continue to produce well past 100 years of age. As with young trees, management determines their level of production. Browsing the web and reference material, little has been found directly addressing how one rekindles production in older trees which at one time were decent bearing trees. If production is the focus, the easy answer would be to take the tree out including stump and plant a newer and superior variety. Fond memories associated with many older trees leaves this approach unacceptable. A case in point is the Schley variety, of which few remain following recent major hurricanes. Even though efforts have begun to propagate the favored Schley for NC planting, production is several years away. Personal experience has proven that older and unproductive trees can be returned to production, even though it is acknowledged that level of production is not expected to be

as strong as when the tree was young. The related picture (below right) is from a professionally managed orchard which was abandoned for several years, then ravaged by the late '90's hurricanes. The environment in this area dictated that salvageable trees be managed to return them to production. As in this picture some trees were so damaged, butt cuts were the only option. New growth was generated and some production within 3-5 years. Selective limb pruning is the more preferred approach. Not only does selective limb pruning produce young fruiting wood, it also opens the tree's canopy for light penetration which results in development of new terminals on existing major limbs which will begin fruiting in 3-5 years. When larger major limbs are selectively pruned, the overall height of the tree is reduced, making it easier to apply insecticides and overall management of the tree. A better approach would be to selective prune over a 2-4 year period while trees are dormant, exercising care to minimize damage to lower limbs.

The recommended rate of fertilization, one-half pound nitrogen per inch of trunk diameter at head height will provide nutrients to speed growth regeneration. Fertilizers should contain micronutrients readily available at most agricultural supply stores. In pursuit of its educational mission, NCPGA will remain vigilant on this subject and include it in future workshop presentation.



Butt cuts on trees are not advised. These were necessary in a storm recovery mode of action

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Recipe and photograph
from the Georgia Pecan
Commission

www.GeorgiaPecans.org

Pecan Pita Pockets

Cooking Time: 15 minutes

1-1/3 cup part skim ricotta cheese

4 pita bread, white

2-1/2 tablespoons brown sugar

1 cup pecans, chopped

2 pears

Preheat oven to 450 degrees F. Blend ricotta cheese in blender until smooth. Toast pita bread in oven for 3-5 minutes until crisp. Cut pear in 1/2 inch chunks. Spread 1/3 cup ricotta cheese onto each pita and top with 1/4 cup chopped pear. Sprinkle with brown sugar and chopped pecans. Bake in oven for 5-6 minutes.

Per serving: 542 calories, 18 g protein, 27g fat, 6g saturated fat, 14 g monounsaturated fat, 61 g cholesterol