

# PECAN NEWS



## Toast to Texas Pecans

In celebration of Texas Pecan Month and Texas Wine Month in October, the Texas Pecan

Board launched **A Toast to Texas Pecans** campaign, which included a gubernatorial proclamation declaring Texas Pecan Month, media outreach, and the first of its kind Texas Pecan and Wine virtual tasting.

The Texas Pecan Board’s media outreach, including the distribution of a press release for Texas Pecan Month, generated over **123 million impressions nationwide**.

Over 100 people purchased Texas Pecan and Wine kits, featuring five Texas wines curated by Sommelier Jessica Dupuy, Texas pecans from Millican Pecan Company, and a pecan and wine pairing booklet with Texas pecan recipes from The Kitchen Wrangler, Melissa Guerra, paired with Texas wines. The hour-and-a-half pecan and wine tasting event took place on October 21 and stimulated great discussion and questions through a virtual platform. Speakers Dupuy, Guerra and myself provided pecan and wine education, while Dupuy and Guerra lead attendees through a guided tasting, explaining how Guerra’s Texas pecan recipes were the perfect complement to the selected wines. A post-event survey showed that **96 percent of respondents rated the event as good or excellent**, and 100 percent were interested in participating in a similar event in the future.

In the future, this effort aims to generate more synergies between the two industries, especially from an agritourism standpoint. In fact, post-event survey respondents indicated **they wanted to visit a pecan orchard** (75 percent) or winery (86 percent).

As a result, several Texas pecan growers and wineries have developed holiday consumer packages, including Brennan Vineyards and Sorrells Pecans.

## Freeze Damage in 2019 and 2020

This crop year is one for the books when it comes to freezes! There was a tremendous cold front that came through in October of 2019 that reached all the way into South Texas. Joe Massey near Uvalde reported freeze

damage to buds that affected his crop load for 2020. I was in Dustin Miller’s orchard near Brownfield and the damage on trees was to the ground in many cases. El Paso had problems finishing harvest in 2019-20, Doug Schaefer has Pawnee (a “northern” variety) with severe dieback near St Lawrence and here in Central Texas, we have the same problem. Fast forward to October of 2020 and this picture is at Jake Montz’s orchard near Wichita Falls with this year’s early freezing weather.



I am mentioning this to say that these freezes are causing growers lots of issues – but not just production issues! Pecans in general, and pecan freeze damage itself, is something insurance companies, USDA-Farm Service Agency and Risk Management have trouble understanding. I have written several letters to all the above trying to explain that freeze damage may or may not be visible on the tree, that it may not show up till the new crop is formed and that it may take years to heal.

It would be wise to educate all the entities and agencies that you deal with as a pecan farmer about pecan production. I would also include a special invite to your County Agent to see your orchard and know what you are up against as a pecan farmer. When disaster strikes the Texas Pecan Board is certainly willing to help but having local folks on your side is especially important too!



## 2021 Specialty Crop Grants and Export Support

The Texas Pecan Board was fortunate in 2020 to apply for and receive 3 different grants to help Texas pecan farmers. The total of all three is **nearly \$75,000** and they were only funded because of the commitment

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that Texas pecan growers have shown to their industry and their Texas pecan organizations.

The **first grant** is to study the economics of pecan production and answer questions like, what does it cost to be in pecan production and what should you be spending on the many production aspects of pecan production? This data is important as we develop better crop insurance, inform government crop support programs, and improve the overall financial health of Texas pecan farmers.

The **second grant** is going to sound strange, but we received monies to study all about the demand for pecans in Mexico and the potential for increasing that demand. Mexico does produce pecans, but they produce very few varieties and most of what they produce is for baking. Mexico City is fast becoming a “foodie” place and they want a variety of pecan products to use in new and innovative foods and Texas pecans are the answer.

The **third grant** starts December 1, and first is to study pecan weevil awareness in West Texas, especially among the urban populations that might accidentally bring weevil into urban centers. Second, to identify the exact locations of all orchards or yard trees areas with weevil infestations. And lastly, look at all trapping and treatment options to be better at tracking weevil movement and possible eradication of small populations.

## 2019 Texas Crop Data

Texas was estimated by USDA to produce about 42 million pounds in 2019 with the bulk or 36 million to come from improved pecan production. I know in most of the areas I travel, production was less than expected and native production was spotty at best.

Texas Pecan Board received reports from 85 out of 272 producing farms in Texas. Those 85 farms represent 19,139,568 lbs. of pecans and 16,213,396 lbs. or **85% was produced by 20 growers**. Pecan production in Texas has consolidated into larger farms while the actual number of pecan producers has remained stable. There are still a lot of pecan growers in Texas!

## Pecan Shows

This is the time of year we start to harvest the crop and collect variety samples for pecan shows. As a former county agent, I can't remember a year when I wasn't involved in a December pecan show - I like pecan



shows! I already know of many shows and have the dates on my calendar along with the four pecan shows I am judging the first week of December.

Pecan shows give me lots of valuable information about the Texas pecan crop. I get an easy idea of what quality and pecan size is for the year as we weigh and count out samples. Also, I get a chance to see what varieties work well under the environmental conditions of the past few months. Then there is the insect and disease problems that become evident when we see the actual samples. I will know if stink bug is an issue or weevil or hickory shuckworm or pecan scab. Lastly, it is good to talk to pecan growers and hear what problems they had, issues that need solving or what their plans are for next year. All good stuff to know as we think about pecan grower education for next year!

## Pecan Weevil Research

This past year we worked with USDA-ARS in College Station to collect adult pecan weevils for a research study to develop a pecan weevil pheromone. Dr. Charles Suh is an entomologist with ARS, and he works on cotton boll weevil insects and their pheromone traps. The idea was to be able to capture the pheromone that pecan weevils give off and then reproduce that pheromone to attract adult pecan weevils into traps.

Unfortunately for 2020 we didn't catch many pecan weevils and the ones we caught were weak. We did discover several valuable bits of information that should help next year – you should never quit learning. Also, we need to find more places to put out traps, especially closer to College Station. This next year pecan growers may get a call about your good (bad) pecan weevil areas where we might put out weevil traps in 2021.

## Pecan Meeting in De Leon, Dec. 17

There will be an extremely important meeting for pecan growers and industry on Thursday, December 17 at noon (sponsored lunch) at De Leon City Hall in De Leon, Texas. **Because of Covid please RSVP at 325.356.2539, the Comanche Co. Extension office.**

There are a lot of issues pecan growers are dealing with and this meeting will be a great time to meet the people connected with pecan organizations and hear some great discussion.

The Texas Pecan Board has been invited along with Texas Pecan Growers Association, American Pecan Council, and National Pecan Federation. Each group will talk about what their organization is doing and how it impacts pecan production, sales, marketing, and the future of pecans in the US.

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