

## 2013 Pecan Calendar for Texas

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January 2013

As pecan growers enter the 2013 pecan year it is good to outline management practices which may need to be used and develop plans. The 2012 pecan season in Texas was difficult as the multi-year drought continues. The 2011 crop was short, the 2012 crop was large, low quality, with low prices. December 2012 has been wet and cold, so it will be interesting to see how the year will develop. Overall tree health prior to bud break is unknown and we do not know what the 2013 flowering and fruit set will be. As of this date, it appears we will have four cool or cold winters in a row, which is good. The 2013 Texas pecan crop may be low to poor tree health in 2011 and overcropping in 2012.

### January / February

- 2012 low prices could result in a large carryover of quality nuts or kernels.
- Drain or blow water out of all irrigation lines above ground, to prevent freeze.
- Participate in A&M Pecan Shortcourse Jan 28 through Feb 1, call 979 845 7692 to register.
- During cold days clean shop, barn, equipment, winterize sprayers and irrigation, etc.
- Collect and store graftwood while fully dormant, store at 45F in poly bags until April and May.
- Prune all "V" trunks to one trunk on small and med size trees to prevent blowout or split trunks.
- During very cold days, work on 2012 records and IRS data, collecting all expenses.
- Prepare soil for new plantings shoot a base line and rows with plans for tree removal in 15 years.
- Plant young trees in deep well drained soil, cut back top ½ , and protect trunk with a Grow Tube.
- Select, mark, remove crowd trees as limbs touch; contract for firewood or BBQ wood.
- Large orchards may continue to mechanically hedge to prevent crowding.
- In young orchards; cut back central leader on 2,3, and 4 year old trees.
- In young orchards; thin out long crow's feet shoots at the end of limbs.
- In young orchards; tip prune 2012 shoots over 24" long to prevent crow's feet, do once per tree only in the early life of the tree. This is not an every year practice.
- In young orchards; remove trashy 1"+ shoots on lower 4' of trunk.
- Collect graftwood asap, the long cold 2012 winter could end early.

- On last years grafts; after care, tie or cut back main graft shoot to prevent blow out.
- On last years grafts; remove suckers below the graft which are over 2 inch in diameter.
- Contact chemical dealers to make sure needed pesticides will be available before first spray.
- Record weekly rainfall and temperatures below freezing with dates.
- Ice damaged trees need to be reported to USDA and local gov't for clean up help.
- Freeze damaged buds and new bark can be checked with razor blade cross cuts to identify brown (dead) / white (ok) color of tissue.

## March

- On hand 2012 pecans must be stored frozen or sold before March.
- Spray herbicide strip down tree row for older trees to kill winter weeds before bud break.
- Spray ROUNDUP strip or circle around young trees, using 24"+ Grow Tubes to protect trunks.
- Plan a ROUNDUP tolerant pigweed treatment, higher rate, earlier on young seedlings.
- Check irrigation system for freeze damage and blow out algae in main and lateral lines.
- Check tractors and sprayers before the big April and May spray rush.
- Check sprayer pumps for freeze damage.
- Contact chemical and fertilizer dealers again for product availability and best prices.
- Hopefully, 2012-13 winter rains should have refilled the soil water holding capacity.
- If no rains occurs, irrigate at full potential but do not saturate the soil; apply 1" week.
- Record weekly rainfall and temperatures below freezing with dates.

## April

- At Bud Break begin bi-weekly foliar zinc + N sprays on young trees, spray only until wet.
- Control weed free strip in mature orchards with 1% ROUNDUP, mowing, or cultivation.
- Calibrate orchard sprayers insure a minimum of 100 gallons of water per acre and accurate pesticide volume per acre.
- Clean sprayer filters and nozzle tips every time the sprayer is used.

- Spray zinc + N on mature bearing trees beginning at bud break, repeat in 7 days, repeat in 7 days, repeat in 14 days, and final zinc spray in 21 days; with a total of 5 zinc sprays.
- Fertilize bearing trees which had a heavy crop in 2012, with 30 lb N / acre in 4<sup>th</sup> week of April.
- Do Not fertilize trees which had a low or no crop in 2011.
- Use N on 2,3,4 year trees when shoots are 3" and repeat N at low rate every 2 wks until June 15.
- On young trees irrigate weekly if no rains occur, WARNING, do not saturate the soil.
- Grafting begins when bark slips with new growth, using graftwood collected in Jan / Feb.
- If frequent rains occur; spray with fungicide on bearing trees to prevent scab growth on leaves.
  - Scab was zero in 2011 and 2012 so spore carryover should be low. If rains come, when scab lesions are on new leaflets or leaf midribs, fungicides are needed immediately. If continued rains occur, spray fungicides for scab prevention on susceptible varieties.
- If no rains occur, irrigate bearing trees at full potential but do not saturate the soil; apply 1" week.
- Record weekly rainfall and temperatures below freezing with dates.
- Record budbreak and catkin pollen release. Record freeze date if catkin death occurs.

## May

- Continue weekly irrigation on young trees; do not saturate the soil with over watering.
- Train young trees to only one trunk, with "V" trunks, remove one, keep the best one.
- Grafting can continue as long as bark slips.
- Keep up to date on pecan nut casebearer via [Bill Ree's reports at pecanimpipe.org](#)
- Monitor pecan nut casebearer pheromone traps daily, to determine when to observe eggs.
- Record and plot all casebearer counts to determine if a spray is needed. The spray window is 12 to 16 days after the first strong moth catch.
- Sample 10 clusters on 32 trees (320 clusters) daily and count eggs. If 2 or more clusters have eggs, then 10% of the nuts will be infested and lost.
- For crop load management; count shoot tips which have clusters; 3 of 10 is a low crop, 5 of 10 is a good crop, and if 7 of 10 shoots have clusters the crop is heavy. Crops of 7,8,9 or 10 will need to be thinned by trunk shaking in July or early August. Some growers may use May casebearer

feeding to reduce crops with 9 or 10 cluster loads. Many Texas growers did not reduce crop size in 2012 and poor kernel quality resulted.

- Fertilize bearing trees with 2<sup>nd</sup> application of N at a 30 lb of N for heavy 2013 crop trees or the 1<sup>st</sup> application for a moderate current season crop trees.
- Zinc + N foliar sprays continued every 14 days on young trees growing fast.
- Zinc + N foliar sprays continued for bearing trees as per schedule listed in April above.
- Pecan nut casebearer spray only if needed according to sampling and crop size, the spray should cover entire orchard at insect peak for maximum kill. If an extended emergence occurs, two sprays may be needed.
- Spray 2<sup>nd</sup> herbicide strip down tree row when weeds are 8 inches tall.
- ROUNDUP tolerant pigweed may make rapid growth, if so mow low and spray again.
- Frequent rains require fungicide sprays for scab on susceptible varieties, full coverage is needed.
- If no rains occur, irrigate bearing trees at full potential but do not saturate the soil; apply 1" week.
- Record weekly rainfall.

## June

- Continue weekly irrigation on young trees, do not saturate the soil.
- Spray 5<sup>th</sup> foliar zinc + N spray on bearing trees, continue on young trees.
- Control weed free strip with 1% ROUNDUP spray, close mowing, or cultivation.
- Scout for 2<sup>nd</sup> generation pecan nut casebearer, spray only if needed as per count and crop load.
- Fertilize young trees last time in first week of June so that growth stops by September; because stopped growth prevents freeze injury to vigorous shoots in Oct, Nov, or Dec.
- Fertilize bearing trees with 3<sup>rd</sup> application of N at 30 lb / acre if crop is good or heavy. If secondary growth called overgrowth occurs at the cluster, too much N has been applied.
- Irrigate weekly if no rain occurs to increase final nut size on bearing trees.
- Irrigate weekly on young trees, with double rate of April, WARNING, do not saturate the soil.
- Rains will require fungicide sprays with good coverage on bearing trees. Constant rains will require max fungicide strength and coverage.

- Record scab infection rating with 1 = zero, 2 = light, 3 = mod, 4 = heavy, and 5 = total loss. In 2007 we learned there is great degree of scab resistance by variety, this must be recorded.
- Control sod and weed in row middles via mowing or herbicides.
- Aphid populations must be constantly monitored and controlled.
- If no rains occur, irrigate bearing trees at full potential but do not saturate the soil; apply 1" week.
- Record weekly rainfall.

## July

- Late July through September is "the critical management" period for bearing trees and water is the key to success. In 2007 and 2012, rains stopped in early August and drought occurred with low quality kernels. 2009 had no rain in May, June, July and August, 2011 and 2012 had no rain in the growing season, irrigation was essential. If no rains occur, irrigate bearing trees at full potential but do not saturate the soil; increase the irrigation rate to 2" per week in July, Aug, and Sept. Irrigation is now critical; apply weekly as per soil holding capacity and tree use without saturation. Tree and crop stress must be prevented for the next 60 days.
- Nut thinning, fertilization, and irrigation, must be conducted on good and heavy crop trees.
- Count shoots for 5 of 10 or more terminals for nut thinning, fertilizer, and irrigation demands.
- Nut thinning by trunk shaking in late July is essential to reduce crop when 7,8,9, 10 of 10 shoots have clusters. Do not delay trunk shaking because nut removal is easiest early and kernel filling is better if the crop is reduced earlier. Next years' flowering, nut set and crop is also better.
- Fertilizer **must not** be applied to young trees to prevent early winter freeze injury.
- Fertilize bearing trees with 4<sup>th</sup> application of N at 20 lb / acre if crop is good or heavy.
- Irrigation on young trees is now 4X the April rate and applied weekly without saturation.
- Zinc + N foliar sprays on young trees will be stopped after one application early in July.
- Plan to attend [TPGA meetings](#) in College Station with a tour of Texas A&M Orchards and [USDA Pecan Breeding Center](#) on the Brazos River.
- Record weekly rainfall.

## August

- Avoid stress on bearing trees; continue to nut thin all trees with a heavy crop if not in July.
- Avoid stress on bearing trees; apply 20 lb N per acre to trees with heavy crop.
- Avoid stress on bearing trees; irrigate weekly at max rate without saturation.
- Avoid stress on bearing trees; control all weeds which use water and nitrogen.
- Avoid stress on bearing trees; plan to remove crowded trees in Jan & Feb, 2014.
- Monitor for shuck worm, stink bug, and black aphid; and spray only as needed.
- Weevil traps need to be in place early in August and monitor and spray as needed. If heavy emergence occurs, spray to protect nuts in the gel-dough stage if needed.
- If a good crop exists; contact your main pecan buyers to let them know what you have.
- Record weekly rainfall.

## September

- Avoid stress on bearing trees; continue to irrigate weekly for kernel filling and shuck opening.
- Stop irrigation on young trees to prevent freeze injury from Oct, Nov, or Dec major freeze.
- Begin cleaning orchard floor in preparation for harvest.
- Service harvesting and cleaning equipment for fast start at shuck split.
- Contact buyers with the estimate of your crop, quality, to determine the prices being paid.
- Subscribe for THE PECAN NEWSLETTER from TPGA for weekly crop report and prices.
- Prepare equipment for crow, squirrel, raccoon management; also plan to prevent human theft.
- Record weekly rainfall and shuck split dates for each variety and date harvest begins.
- Begin harvesting Pawnee, Caddo, Kanza, Osage, and other early ripening varieties.
- Spray RoundUp® to kill poison ivy on mature trunks and fence rows.

## October

- Plan to crack, shell, and bag kernels for retail sales at the orchard.
- Continue irrigation until shuck split for good opening and fast drop, this is important.

- Harvest nuts as soon as shucks split for best early prices; two shakes will be needed for entire crop; all nuts of improved varieties need to be harvested in 8 weeks or before Dec 7.
- Air dry early season nuts to remove water from 20% down to 5% for light kernel color and price. Kernels should snap when bent, if kernel bends, more drying is needed.
- Continue to contact buyers for prices and follow prices in [The Pecan Newsletter](#).
- Collect 40 nut samples of each variety for County Pecan Show and learn how to grade nuts.
  - Grade nuts for sale for optimum price; record percent kernel, size, and kernel color; record all flaws and do not use their weight in determining data, report flaws to buyers for fair price. Collect nut samples at random to obtain a fair estimate of nut quality.
- Guard pecans from human theft; fight crows, squirrels, raccoons, turkey, deer, etc.
- Store pecans in a rat-proof room or containers with fans to continue drying.
- Record weekly rainfall, shuck split and harvest dates for each variety. Record freeze dates.
- Record the weight and grade of each variety for sale.
- Ship samples of nuts to buyers immediately to obtain best price.
- Leaf fall in October is a serious tree health issue, leaves should be healthy until first freeze.

## November

- Work as fast and long as possible to beat rains which make harvest very hard work.
- Harvest, clean, dry, sanitize, crack, shell, and market by variety for best price and sale.
- Sanitize nuts in 200ppm Clorox solution (1 T per gallon of water) before cracking.
- Market best nuts as kernels for retail sales at the orchard in holiday season.
- Participate in County Pecan Show with county Extension agent.
- Stay in constant contact with your buyers to insure your price and sale.
- Record weekly rainfall, shuck split dates, freeze date, and harvest dates.
- Record leaf fall date for each variety.

## December

- Finish harvest as soon as possible or by Dec 7 for ideal holiday prices.
- Drain all sprayer pumps and irrigation equipment to prevent freeze damage.
- Finalize records for season while all costs and expenses can be remembered.
- Begin tree thinning or hedging immediately after harvest in crowded orchards. Tree crowding when limbs begin to touch must be corrected by tree removal or mechanical tree hedging.
- Record weekly rainfall, freeze dates, and harvest dates.

## **Summary**

All pecan orchard operations can vary according to production potential of the soil, water, variety, climatic region, management skills, financing, tree age, weather, equipment, labor, and more. In addition, young trees grow and bear better than mature trees and are managed different.

As taught by Dr. Larry Stein, high performance varieties such as Wichita, Cheyenne, Kiowa, Choctaw, and others demand maximum management. Therefore, this calendar is in only a guide, each orchard and grower will need to develop a plan specific to their needs and capabilities.