

# THE PECAN NEWSLETTER

Vol. 39, No. 9

Published by the editors of PECAN SOUTH magazine

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November 6, 2020

**Here is the ninth newsletter for the 2020 season. Thank you to everyone who contributed information to this edition of the newsletter.**

## SOUTHEAST

Cooler weather and clear skies enable Georgia growers to push through the halfway point of harvest and continue collecting varieties like 'Kiowa,' 'Oconee,' 'Creek,' 'Sumner,' and 'Excel.' Bouts of heavy rainfall over the last few weeks brought concerns for scab, but reports indicate that quality has held.

The weather has been good for growers in Alabama who are split between harvest and storm recovery. Although Alabama's largest production area was devastated by Hurricane Sally, some growers throughout the state have been able to start collecting their nuts. One grower reports that quality for the remaining crop appears "good overall," though varied.

Elsewhere in the Southeast, pecan trees in North Carolina hang heavy with a good crop after a growing season with adequate rain and sunshine and no major weather events, like the hurricanes that have unfortunately battered other production areas. Many growers began shaking trees at the end of September. In the coming weeks, harvest in North Carolina is expected to pick up, and more nuts will come into local retail stores, farmers markets, and farm stands.

## TEXAS & OKLAHOMA

Growers in parts of Texas and most of Oklahoma continue to recover after an early-season ice storm that brought freezing rain, sleet, and gusty winds last week.

Growers in North-Central, Central, and Southwest Oklahoma were hit especially hard. Their trees were fully leafed out and still carried pecans. Some areas received over an inch of ice, which caused a great deal of tree and limb loss as the trees were overloaded and could not bear the added weight. Some trees split in half, while large branches broke off of others. Although temperatures didn't drop much below 29 or 30 degrees in many areas, growers in some of these areas report that shucks are not opening. Shucks froze shut and the nuts may not be salvageable. According to one industry member in Oklahoma, "growers are now trying to figure out how to proceed with harvest and clean up in the orchards."

Producers throughout the rest of Texas continue to shake trees and sweep crop off the ground. Sporadic rain over the last few weeks in parts of Central Texas has delayed harvest for some producers, who have had to stop until the orchard floor dries.

One Central Texas grower, whose harvest was delayed, has other weather concerns on their mind. "I hope the weather does not freeze before nuts mature," they say, after witnessing the freezes in Oklahoma and other parts of Texas. This grower plans to begin to harvest soon.

Another Central Texas grower says that harvest moves slowly in their part of the region. "Trees still have green leaves, and so far the quality is good where growers removed a third of the crop in August. Those who did not thin the overload hurt their quality where it could not go for retail sales," they add.

In South Texas, growers also continue to gather their nuts and shake trees. Good weather has allowed these producers to speed through harvest and helped quality. One grower in this region adds that quality looks great in irrigated orchards but poor in non-irrigated.

## WEST TEXAS, NEW MEXICO, & ARIZONA

Although New Mexico and West Texas received its first hard freeze last week, harvest has not officially started yet. Usually, most growers begin around mid or late November. Because of this, many are simply not prepared to head out into the orchard and gather their crop.

Additionally, almost every state in the United States is experiencing a third wave of COVID-19 with record increases in cases and hospitalizations. New

PECAN STOCKS IN COLD STORAGE  
USDA Report

	(1,000 pounds)		
Sept. 30, 2019	Aug. 31, 2020	Sept. 30, 2020	
69.60	62.52	57.96	
42.68	120.63	85.56	
200.86	262.72	217.29	
mil. lbs.	mil. lbs.	mil. lbs.	

*We calculate the total converted inshell by converting shelled meats to inshell using a yield of 44% (divide shelled by 0.44) and adding to the reported inshell.*

Mexico, Arizona, and far West Texas are seeing a large resurgence in coronavirus cases. Because of this, growers in the West expect to have trouble finding enough workers and may take longer to finish harvest than in other years.

Those producers who are ready for harvest could finish collecting their nuts by mid-December. As harvest kicks off, these areas will learn more about how the early freeze impacted their trees and crop. One producer in the Mesilla Valley shares that so far they haven't seen much damage on their trees, but some exhibit dead leaves. Other producers express concerns over how the switch in temperature—from in the 90s to below freezing to back into the 70s—will impact the crop's quality. There are expectations that growers could see an increase in sticktight.

## MEXICO

Most producers in Sonora wrapped up harvest at the end of last week; they now move on to cleaning and processing their pecans. In other parts of the country, growers also approach the end of harvest. Producers Coahuila should finish collecting their nuts in the coming days if the weather holds.

In the state of Chihuahua, producers have passed harvest's halfway point for both native and improved nuts. Growers in this region continue to report quality issues and now say they see trees with major foliage decline as the lack of sufficient water impacts orchards. Producers in the region of Delicias say they have had problems with theft in their orchards, but the most common problem reported for this area is poor nut quality and a short crop in general. Overall, Mexico is looking to have a short crop with mixed quality.

As more nuts are brought in and harvest moves along, commercial loads enter the market more frequently. Prices range between \$1.77 and \$2.04 per pound, depending on the nuts' quality and size. Some offerings are selling at a slightly higher price of \$2.18 per pound.

Truckloads of improved varieties are moving through the market easily and at a normal speed. Smaller lots are not seeing much movement. Offerings of high-quality nuts with a fill greater than 55 percent are priced from \$3.00 to \$3.10 a point. These prices increased slightly over the last week, following a rise in demand.

Reports also indicate that Chinese buyers have started showing a little more interest in the crop. Mexican growers hope that this interest translates into increased sales.

## MARKET & PRICES

Growers and buyers in the retail and gift packing market continue to report steady movement and sales as

we approach the holiday season.

"Our phone is ringing off the hook; people are interested in getting pecans," says a retail store owner who is looking to buy fresh pecans.

According to a grower with a retail store, "The retail market is steady to average. Local market days and such being shut down due to the virus have affected our retail sales, but they're still steady."

The wholesale or export market remains weak and unsettled with little to no movement and low prices.

"Market is terrible if selling to accumulators. I have a barn full of pecans, and from the prices I am hearing for wholesale, prices put my cost of production higher than pecan value," one grower says. "For a producer to be profitable, retail sales and shelling your own product are required."

A sheller confirms that commercial quality is not moving through the market. "No sheller wants to inventory product when they already have inventory from last year," they say.

The pandemic, lower prices, and a seemingly weak market take their toll on the pecan industry—growers especially. Many producers are beginning to consider holding onto their pecans until they see movement in the market and a shift in prices. At the same time, buyers have expressed a need to remain cautious as COVID cases rise and uncertainty abounds.

Although current deliveries are very light, there are some reports on prices for offerings of new crop. Prices for truckloads of 'Desirables'—with a nut count between 45 and 51 and a meat yield of 50 to 52 percent—range from \$1.25 to \$1.46 per pound inshell. Loads of 'Elliott' with a count of 65 to 67 percent are being priced around \$1.20 and \$1.39 per pound. Reports also indicate that 'Sumner' truckloads with a meat yield of 52 to 54 percent are selling in the range of \$1.30 to \$1.41 per pound.

Prices for smaller or yard tree lots vary depending on the region, the crop's quality, and the variety. With a nut count from 55 to 65 and a yield of 48 to 54 percent, smaller loads of 'Desirable' are mostly selling at around \$1.35 per pound. Yard tree lots of 'Elliot' are being priced between \$0.90 and \$1.00 per pound. Lots of native nuts from yard trees are being priced from \$0.35 to \$0.50 per pound.

**E-MAIL:** If you would like to contribute information about your crop and area, please contact Catherine Clark at [cclark@pecansouthmagazine.com](mailto:cclark@pecansouthmagazine.com).

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