

## Site Selection

Pecans are native to deep well drained sandy loam to clay loam soils of river and creek bottoms. Plant pecans where pecans grow naturally for best results.

Topsoil depth should be at least 3 feet to 5 feet minimum. The deeper the soil the larger the tree will get.

Soil drainage is critical for good growth. To check, dig a 30 inch hole and fill with water. Water should drain in less than 24 hours on a good soil, 24-48 hours on a marginal soil, not drained after 48 hours is unsuitable.

Space trees at least 40 feet apart and a minimum 15 feet from driveways and foundations. Permanent spacing is 100 feet apart.

Plant pecans near other pecan trees for good pollination. Plant two compatible varieties, or within ¼ mile of native groves.

## Varieties

Check for early or late pollen-shedding to match varieties if necessary.

When selecting a variety look for an upright, strong, disease resistant tree that produces thin shelled, filled pecan.

a. Pawnee – good strong upright tree that produces medium size high quality nut early in the season. Resistant to honeydew aphid. Can overproduce and have problems filling out.

b. Kanza – good strong upright tree. Early pecan which produces a smaller nut that seems to adapt size to moisture conditions. Small nut, but high quality. Good disease resistance.

c. Nocono – good strong upright tree. Vigorous grower with excellent nut qualities. Scab resistant but somewhat susceptible to aphids.

d. Desirable – Old dependable variety. Consistent and moderate producer. Large, good quality nut. Scab susceptible.

e. Lakota – Medium size, excellent quality. Early nut maturity. Vigorous upright tree growth. Very resistant to scab.

Select tall, vigorous growing, bare root trees.

### Planting

Plant in winter from mid December to March 1.

Keep moist until planting.

Plant in hole large enough for root system and replace with same soil. Do not add soil amendments fertilizers, etc. to the fill dirt.

Sprinkle beneficial mycorrhizae fungi on roots of tree and/or good compost on ground around tree.

Pack soil around roots to eliminate air pocket.

Water trees as soon as possible.

Plant tree at same depth as it grew.

Prune off at least 1/3 – 1/2 of top of tree. This point is debatable.

Protect trees first few years until bark hardens on trunk.

### Fertilization

Nitrogen – Use a cover crop or spread compost around trees to increase organic matter in the soil and enhance soil microbial life. . Build a healthy soil by using good organic practices. No synthetic high NPK fertilizers as they kill the soil life.

Zinc – zinc sulfate or chelated zinc spray for the first few years.

Spray aerated compost tea on leaves and ground. This is the best all purpose spray to use.

## Water

Water is essential during establishment and development of the young tree. Mulch tree well to conserve moisture and reduce soil temperature.

Newly planted pecan trees need at least 7 gallons of water per tree once a week.

Do not over water. The tree roots need oxygen as well and must not be constantly saturated with water or they will be unable to "breathe."

## Diseases and Pests

Tree diseases include:

- Scab
- Zinc deficiencies

Pests include:

- Casebearer
- Hickory shuck worm
- Fall webworm
- Pecan weevil
- Yellow & black aphids

Remedies: Healthy soil makes healthy plants more resistant to disease and insects. A healthy ecosystem will include birds, wasps, ladybugs, giant wheel bugs, trichogramma wasps, lacewings, bats, etc. Bacillus Thuringensis (bt) in emergency for caterpillar problems. Caterpillars must eat it to be effective.

[www.batcon.org](http://www.batcon.org) Bat Conservation International

[www.tpga.org](http://www.tpga.org) Texas pecan growers association

[www.bio-organics.com](http://www.bio-organics.com) source for mycorrhizae

[www.dirtdoctor.com](http://www.dirtdoctor.com) Howard Garrett's website

[www.kunafin.com](http://www.kunafin.com) beneficial insects

[www.rinconvitova.com](http://www.rinconvitova.com) beneficial insects

[jbyrd@centex.net](mailto:jbyrd@centex.net) John Byrd, San Saba, TX 325/372-3107, 254-697-2334

[www.extension-horticulture.tamu.edu/carya/pecans/pecalph.htm](http://www.extension-horticulture.tamu.edu/carya/pecans/pecalph.htm)

John Byrd is a fourth generation pecan orchardist and pecan buyer. He and his wife Jimma operate Kings Crossing Farm a certified organic pecan farm in San Saba County. It's here that he conducts research on sustainable pecan culture. He's a member of the Texas Pecan Growers Association, Texas Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association and holds a master in microbiology from Texas A&M. He'll be speaking with you today about growing pecan trees. Also John Byrd is general manager of Bagley Pecans in Cameron. He's what people in the business call an "accumulator." That means he purchases pecan crops from Texas farmers and bundles them in loads of 50,000 pounds to be transported by 18-wheelers and sold to shelling companies.