

PECAN COUNTRY NEWS

Volume 32

Summer 2020

On the Calendar

Everything seems subject to change, but here's what the future looks like in mid July.

Aug 11:

AL Pecan Growers Summer Tour, Tallassee

Sep 2:

TX Pecan Growers Field Day; Brownwood, TX

Sep 3:

Conferencia Nogalero a Nogalero, Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico

Sep 9-11:

Dia del Nogalero, Delicias, Chih, Mexico

Sep 10-11:

GA Pecan Growers Conf.; Tifton, GA

Sep 16-17:

National Pecan Shellers Virtual Meeting online

Sep 17:

AL Pecan Growers Mtg.; Fairhope, AL

Savage Equipment remains strong through pandemic.

The five-decade success story of Savage Equipment did not happen without a few bumps along the way, and the latest challenge certainly qualifies as one of the larger bumps. While many businesses were forced to close their doors at various times during this national challenge, the Savage team has remained on the job and expects to do so going forward.

At Savage Equipment, we have done our best to put the COVID-19 time to good use. We have made some strategic moves regarding manufacturing and operational procedures, and we have been doing what we do best, developing innovative new machines that Savage will be proud to introduce over the next couple months.

We're thankful that all our employees have remained in good health through these difficult times, and like all of you, we're eager to put these trying times behind us. In the meantime, all our locations stand ready to meet the equipment and parts needs of our customers as the busy harvest season approaches. Let's stay in touch.



Savage Equipment, Madill, OK



Savage of Georgia, Baconton, GA



Savage Southwest, Mesquite, NM

The farmer's example of hopefulness

In a world that could use a little hope right now, the farmer stands out as a symbol of perpetual hopefulness. The previous year may have been a tough one, but when it's time to plant, farmers get busy planting. They water the crop, feed it, weed it, pray for it. They fully expect that this year will bring a profitable harvest, and they do everything in their power to ensure that it does. Maybe the pecan farmers are even more full of hope than most, since they must work expectantly for several years before they see their first harvest. We're thankful for all the farmers reminding us to look forward—brighter days and a great harvest are just around the corner.



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Pecan Folks

Sage of the pecan orchard, Dr. George Ray McEachern, retires.

Anyone who has been around the pecan business for long knows all three of his names. Dr. George Ray McEachern—or George Ray to most folks—has been a featured writer in pecan periodicals for several decades. He has also shared his boundless pecan knowledge at many conferences, always with ample doses of humor.

George Ray McEachern grew up on a citrus farm south of New Orleans, the son of an Agricultural Extension Agent and a home economics teacher. After completing his bachelor's and master's degrees in horticulture at Louisiana State University, he ventured west to Texas A&M University to work on his PhD. As he did so, George Ray became a part-time employee of the Texas Agricultural Extension Service. Conducting much of his research at the A&M pecan orchard, he completed his PhD in horticulture in 1973.

Having grown up with an extension agent for a father and earning minor degrees in Extension Education at both LSU and Texas A&M, George Ray was keenly aware of the how this system of experimentation, outreach and training could be transformational to an agricultural industry. He well understood how to conduct, evaluate and learn from Extension pecan production demonstrations, or what we now call Applied Research, and he put that knowledge to effective use over the course of his career. George Ray traveled the vast expanses of Texas, logging hundreds of thousands of miles to-and-from county pecan production meetings, field days and grafting demonstrations. His audience might be a half-dozen farmers or fifty, but gradually, the training was taking place, newly acquired expertise was permeating the culture and the pecan industry was relentlessly advancing. These county extension events often included a banquet or barbecue, and served as important opportunities for growers to share news about their crop and compare methodologies. On these trips, Dr. McEachern helped launch numerous pecan test plots with County Agents and pecan growers. These experiments provided answers to many important questions on topics such as weed control, tree thinning, nitrogen fertilizer, zinc sprays, tree training, irrigation and much more. Few in the pecan

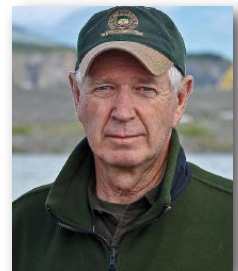


The animated and entertaining Dr. McEachern addressing the Western Pecan Growers Association.

industry have put in the time, effort and miles that George Ray invested in the County Extension Agents and their outreach programs. Many of the lessons learned in these test plots became seminars delivered by Dr. McEachern at innumerable Pecan Grower Association meetings in Texas and throughout the pecan belt. They also provided enriching real-world examples for his lectures delivered to countless horticulture students.

One of the most comprehensive pecan education opportunities available today, is the Texas Pecan Short Course offered at Texas A&M University, a four-day course on everything from basic botany to pecan marketing. Much of the success of the current program is attributable to Dr. McEachern's leadership of the course for almost two decades and his instruction for even longer. When he took over the course in 1973, a few years after its inception, the class consisted of ten county agents. Under George Ray's guidance, the course became a yearly pecan-education bonanza for scores of students hailing from every corner of the pecan-growing world.

The Pecan Short Course and its closely aligned text, *The Texas Pecan Handbook*, are two of many examples of the larger-than-life influence George Ray has had on the pecan-growing community during his 51-year career. The impact Dr. George Ray McEachern has had on this industry will blossom for decades beyond his retirement. We wish him many long and healthy years to savor the abundant fruits of his labor.



Pecan Pieces

News you can use!

Here's a sampling of pecan-related news available on the internet and some of our favorite pecan publications.

What has the APC been up to?

In the April issues of our two favorite magazines, Pecan South and The Pecan Grower, American Pecan Council (APC) Executive Director, Alex Ott educates us on all that's been accomplished by the Federal Marketing Order (FMO) since its inception. Mr. Ott begins with a year-by-year review of steps that have been taken since USDA approved the FMO that inaugurated the American Pecan Council. The article covers a lot of ground regarding how the APC has systematically progressed and recent tangible accomplishments for the pecan industry. It's a lot to cover in a brief summary, so you will likely want to read it for yourself. Here are some highlights.

Current projections show that pecan supply will grow at approximately 6% over the next ten years and demand must increase to keep up. It's a good thing APC is on the job, devoting over 75 cents of every dollar to marketing activities. In addition to the Weber Shandwick marketing team, the APC has engaged with Learfield IMG, iHeart Media and Eat Well Global. They have also moved "some influencer marketing in house through the utilization of the renowned platform, Aspire IQ." (I had to look that one up too.) According to their website, Aspire IQ "began with a vision of the future of media built around the hundreds of thousands of talented content creators building a presence on YouTube, Instagram, Blogs, Snap-Chat, and more." Basically, they help connect businesses with people who have already established a significant (and related) presence on the internet and are able to use their influence to promote products they like (pecans!).

All these efforts appear to be paying off for pecans. "Since inception of the FMO, consumption has been up 12.5%," and that is a significant improvement over pecan consumption trends in previous years.

Tree nuts making their mark out west

In a February fifth article by the above title (Tree Nut Farm Press e-newsletter), author Logan Hawkes writes about the great year for pistachios wrapping up in California then shifts gears to cover how the southwestern U.S.

region has been making great strides in pecan production in recent times. The article touts the Rio Grande Valley region as a "travel-way for pecans moving in and out of the two states [Texas and New Mexico] and in and out of Mexico..."

Once again New Mexico has been tagged the most likely leading pecan producing state as Georgia continues with setbacks created by Hurricane Michael two years ago and struggles to recover from the storm's relentless fury even after two years of new orchard development.

Officials in Georgia say it may be another two to five years before Georgia's pecan numbers can return to pre-storm harvest levels even as Texas, Oklahoma and even Arizona gain pecan acres over their east coast competitors.

According to New Mexico Pecan Growers Association president, Phillip Arnold, the state's crop was lighter than anticipated due to a decrease in summer rain and an early fall freeze. He said that the state would likely fall short of the USDA estimate of 97 million pounds for 2019, but New Mexico would still lead the nation in pecan production.

Pecans in South Africa

If you're interested in an expansive overview of the challenges, triumphs and dreams of the pecan industry in South Africa, the March issue of Pecan South magazine would be a worthy source of information. In a wide-ranging fifteen-page article, Managing Editor Catherine Clark enlightens us on this complex story with considerable insight. Her research for the piece involves extensive travel across this unique and colorful land this past November. It includes numerous conversations with growers, large and small, along with other leaders of the pecan industry. Through these dialogues with many growers, processors and others, you get a clearer picture of the history and culture of the pecan-growing community in South Africa.

Although they have a limited history with pecan growing dating back to the late 1800's, today's pecan industry is mostly comprised of people that are relatively new to pecan growing and processing.

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More Pecan Pieces

Ag Labor (cont. from page 3)

The South African Pecan Nut Producers Association, or SAPPA, is the organizing body for the industry helping growers navigate the many issues inherent in growing pecans. Growers in South Africa struggle with many of the same challenges that U.S. pecan growers face, such as securing reliable water sources and finding consistent, reliable labor. They also strive to find the right cultivars for their environment and experiment with the right methodology for hedging and proper tree spacing.

These same growers face a few interesting issues that are unfamiliar to American growers such as Zebras trampling young pecan trees in certain regions of the country. Not many growers in the southern U.S. have trouble with baboons tearing up sprinkler systems or breaking into farm vehicles. South African farmers also deal with the threat of government expropriation of their land without compensation. It is a very real issue in the country, although some farmers consider it an unlikely possibility.

The piece also includes some graphics illustrating the significant statistics on the pecan industry in South Africa, including the following:

- Pecan acreage is estimated at just under 100,000 acres. (SAPPA)
- 580,000 nursery trees were planted in 2018 (SAPPA)
- 85% of pecan production goes to China
- In 2018, 40,937,000 pounds were produced

Through the data gathered by a third-party consultancy, the American Pecan Council estimated that South Africa could produce around 145 million pounds by 2027, comprising more than 10 percent of the world supply.

Clearly, South Africa's pecan industry leaders have big plans for the future and they certainly have the energy and drive to bring those plans to fruition.

Container versus bareroot pecan trees

In the March issue of Pecan South, our friend, George Ray McEachern applies his substantial knowledge and experience to answering your questions about the pros and cons of container trees vs. bareroot trees. Dr McEachern is a horticulture professor and the resident expert of all things pecan at Texas A&M University.

Dr. McEachern begins his article with a history lesson.

Historically there were three options for planting

a pecan tree: pecan seed, a nursery grown grafted variety tree or a seedling tree, which would be grafted two or three years later.

The “seeds in place” system went the way of the 8-track tape player decades ago because it was “too slow, too difficult to keep the little trees alive and too expensive.” For smaller orchards, the other two systems are still in use, but for large operations, the nursery-grafted tree has become the standard way to go. Originally, these trees were exclusively of the bareroot variety, but about forty years ago, some nurseries in the southeastern U.S. began to grow trees in 4-gallon plastic containers, using sprinkler irrigation.

Fast forward to the year 2020, there are many nurseries now growing pecan trees in containers. A grower now has the choice of planting a container tree versus a bareroot tree. The two systems look alike from the graft up, but the roots are quite different.

McEachern goes on to describe how the root systems differ between the two choices. Bareroot trees have a more substantial taproot system relative to the scion above, and



Planting bareroot trees in Oklahoma

this taproot is able to store more food for the plant. They can be bundled in moist packing material and wrapped in burlap to allow shipping over long distances. Container trees tend to have a lot of feeder roots, compared to bare-root trees but less overall mass in the root system. The roots of container trees often form a “circle of roots in the bottom of the plastic container, and these roots can be large.” The large number of feeder roots, the overhead irrigation and the slow-release fertilizer systems tend to

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Featured Equipment

Harvest season is almost here. Make it your best and safest ever!

Pecan folks in the northern hemisphere are waking up the fact that harvest season is right around the corner. If you're thinking about adding a new piece of equipment, it's time to get that order in, and of course, Savage Equipment would be glad to help with that. For all those pieces of equipment you already own, it's time to blow off the dust, check the fluids and make sure they're in top shape for the busy season ahead. Harvest-time breakdowns are annoying and costly, so here are a few suggestions on how to help keep them to an absolute minimum.

- Consult your operator manual for safe operation and seasonal start-up guidance. (If you've lost your Savage manual, give us a call or send an email.) Keep bystanders well clear when starting and checking equipment.
- Check all hydraulic hoses for cracks and ensure fittings attach snugly. DO NOT check for hydraulic leaks with your hand, as high-pressure fluid can penetrate the skin and cause severe injury. Use paper or cardboard instead.
- Replace hoses before they become a problem.
- Check belts for slippage and for cracks or fraying, and replace them before they break.
- Clean and grease PTO drive-lines. Ensure they telescope freely and safety shields are in good shape.
- Ensure nuts, bolts, set screws and keys are tight.
- Ensure shields and guards are securely in place. If any are missing, contact your original equipment manufacturer to order a new one.
- Most bearings on Savage machinery are sealed bearings and will rarely, if ever, require grease. If you believe it's

needed, apply grease slowly with slight pressure. If the seal has been broken, it will deteriorate more quickly.

- Make sure safety signs are in place and legible.

In addition to getting those machines in good running form, seize this opportunity to ensure your work force is ready by providing all the training and protective equipment they'll need for a safe and productive harvest. Have you acquired new machines that folks need to be trained to run? Have you hired some new hands or recruited new family members to help get the work done. Now is the time to get them well trained for the many tasks ahead. Locate those operator manuals or order the ones you need from your equipment manufacturer and you'll be well on your way to a safer harvest.

And while we're talking about protecting the work force, we may all need to consider how COVID-19 might affect how we operate this coming season and letting your folks know what is expected.

Let's be careful out there!



Have you seen the new Savage 148S, Meat Sizer

This fast, powerful machine is already in use helping nut processors improve their bottom line and speed up their production flow. The interchangeable screens will sort nut-meats into two, three, four or more sizes. These sizing screens can be swapped out very quickly. The discharge chutes can be moved to expel nuts in almost any direction around the circle. You will really appreciate the speed, ease-of-use and rugged durability of this amazing new Savage machine. Contact Savage Equipment if you'd like to take a closer look.



Just Plain Nuts

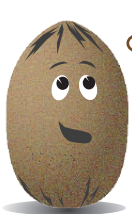
Container vs. Bare-root (cont. from page 4)
produce large scion variety tops.

With either type of nursery tree, McEachern recommends cutting the scion back 50 percent at planting to create a balanced root-to-shoot ratio. Experiments at Mississippi State University in the 1970s found no difference in growth rate and survival when the circle of roots at the bottom of the container were pruned back versus when they were left alone. For bareroot trees, the idea is to cut off enough root to fit into the hole, but leave as much

as possible.

McEachern's bottom line is simple enough.

Today, when all is said and done, there is no difference in tree growth when pecan orchards are planted with bareroot or container grown nursery trees. However, container trees will require diligent irrigation and weed control, while properly planted bareroot trees can survive and grow with normal attention to management.



I wonder how this Coronavirus experience will change us?

It may seem difficult to see anything good in the viral scourge that's been wreaking havoc on our world—physically, emotionally and economically.

But maybe, just maybe, a few positive things will come from this shared experience. For one thing, we have become much more aware of how diseases spread and the part we can play in minimizing transmission. It's also comforting to see examples of people reaching out to express compassion toward their neighbors. Teachers and students, along with grandparents and grandkids, are figuring out how to be more connected through modern technology. Our government and medical authorities will be much better prepared to face the next virus threat that comes along. These past few months have definitely brought about some things we never thought we'd see. Cue the Twilight Zone music.

- *Times Square and the Las Vegas Strip devoid of humans.*
- *Toilet paper and hand sanitizer shortages. Really?*
- *Folks lining up at 6-ft spacing to check out at the grocery store while wearing masks.*

To all our friends out in Pecan Country, we want you to know we've been on the job—continuing to craft the best equipment we know how to make, and looking forward to the day we can all get back together. In the mean-

If you'd like a copy of Pecan Country News delivered to your email in-box each quarter, send an email to pecancountry@savageequipment.com. Feel free to pass this little newsletter along to friends and family.

For any of our Pecan Country neighbors that might be stuck at home in a COVID-19 quarantine, here's a recipe borrowed from our friends at ILOVEPECANS.ORG (aka the National Pecan Shellers). Just the thing for binge-watching old movies at home.



Buttered Pecan Popcorn

Ingredients:

- 8 cups popped popcorn (about ½ cup unpopped)
- Nonstick cooking spray
- ½ cup pecan pieces
- 2 Tbsp. butter
- ⅓ cup light corn syrup
- ¼ cup instant butter pecan pudding mix (dry)
- ¼ tsp. vanilla

Directions:

Preheat oven to 300 degrees. After popping, discard unpopped popcorn kernels. Spray a 17"x12"x2" roasting pan with nonstick cooking spray. Place the popped corn and pecans in the pan. In a separate pan, heat butter and corn syrup, then stir in pudding mix and vanilla. Pour mixture over popcorn. Bake in oven at 300 degrees for 16 minutes, stirring halfway through baking. Remove pan from oven and turn mixture onto a large piece of foil. When cool, break into large pieces and serve.