

# JUST FRUITS

## AND EXOTICS

### PECANS

#### INTRODUCTION

Pecans (*Carya illinoensis*) for Florida must meet one criterion: they must be scab resistant. Scab is a major cause of early leaf drop. Trees that don't hold their leaves until first frost can't store enough energy for the following year's crop. This is one reason pecans typically bear a heavy crop one year and a light one the next (commonly called alternate bearing). Another cause of alternate bearing is poor pollination. Pecans are wind pollinated, and rainy weather during bloom prevents the pollen from floating freely through the air from one tree to another, causing poor fruit set. Two pecans are needed for cross-pollination and must be from different pollination groups. Pecans are either Type I or Type II and you need one from each type for pollination.

#### USES IN THE LANDSCAPE

Create your own edible forest with the large, coarsely textured leaves and broad, umbrellashaped canopy of chestnut, mixed with the willowy beauty of pecan and the broad, heart-shaped leaves of mulberry. Need shade? Plant pecans and cool your house the old-fashioned way.

#### PLANTING + CULTURE

##### SITE SELECTION

Well-drained, deep soils are preferred, but pecans will grow on many soil types. Trees will grow more vigorously and produce more nuts in full sun. Two are required for pollination. Plant 30 feet apart for best results—these will be full-sized shade trees.

##### SOIL PREPARATION + PLANTING

Pecans prefer slightly acid soil (pH 5.5-6.5). If you are in doubt about the acidity of your soil, take a sample to the Cooperative Extension Agent in your county for a soil test.

Dig a planting hole approximately three times the width of the pot and at the same depth as the root ball. Enrich the planting hole with acid mulches like peat moss or rotted pine bark mixed with soil dug from the hole (50:50 mix). Remove the plant from the pot, gently loosen the root ball and place in the planting hole. To avoid burying too deep, make sure plant is positioned with the top most roots at the soil line. Fill the planting hole with the mix of soil and organic matter; gently tamp it in. Water thoroughly to settle the roots and eliminate air pockets. **Do NOT put fertilize in planting hole.** Only apply fertilizer if it is the correct time of year (see Fertilization section below).

If desired, construct a water basin around the base of the tree approximately 36 inches in diameter. Mulch in spring and summer with approximately 4-6 inches of mulch. Pull mulch a couple of inches away from the trunk for good air circulation.

## FERTILIZATION

The type of fertilizer you choose may be chemical or organic. Make sure that the fertilizer contains iron, zinc, manganese, magnesium, molybdenum, copper and boron. These minor elements are very important to plants and most soils are low in these elements. Application rates vary according to age of plant. See chart below:

| <b>Starter Fertilizer &amp; Soil<br/>(Apply at Planting)</b> | <b>Fertilizer to Maintain<br/>(Apply Early March, Late May, &amp; Late July)</b> |
|--|--|
| Espoma Bio-tone® Starter Plus<br>Mix Peat Moss in Soil       | Espoma Holly-tone®   |

Notes:

- Follow Instructions on Bag for how much to apply each time.
- Months to Fertilize vary based on your zone. Fertilize 3 times per year. We recommend the 1<sup>st</sup> fertilization starting after the last Freeze of the winter (Late February/Early March in zone 8) & the last Fertilization being no later than August or even June/July in some of the colder zones 7 & below.)
- Fertilizing too late in the year in colder climates will promote new growth, which will be subject to freeze damage.

See our “Planting a Tree Correctly” Guide & Espoma Bio-tone® and Tree-tone® Fact Sheets on our website for more info.

## WATER

The first year is a critical time for the establishment of a new pecan. Water thoroughly twice a week on light soils and once a week on clay soils. Soak the entire root system deeply – this usually takes 45-60 minutes. Pecans should receive at least 1 inch of water each week for best growth and fruit production. Water regularly, especially during dry periods. Fruit may drop prematurely if insufficiently irrigated during dry spells.

## PRUNING + CARE

Occasional pruning is necessary to open the center of the tree for greater light and air penetration. Remove crossing, dead or damaged branches as needed. For more great information on pecan growing, go to <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/hs229>

## HARVEST

Nuts should be allowed to thoroughly ripen on the tree for best quality and flavor. Wait until they fall from the tree to gather them.

## VARIETIES

**CAPE FEAR – TYPE I** A graceful, shapely long-lived tree that bears nuts at an early age and has good resistance to pecan scab. Produces 45 nuts per lb. Ripens late October. Zones 5A-9A

**ELLIOTT – TYPE II** Excellent scab resistance with high quality meat in a small nut. A premium nut known for its plump, delicious and perfectly shaped halves. Produces 67-70 nuts per lb. Ripens in October. Zones 5A-9A.

**JACKSON – TYPE I** Jackson pecan trees have a willowy habit which makes them a lovely tree. The light brown nuts are large, with excellent taste quality. The tree is moderately resistant to scab and leaf disease, but the nut is highly resistant to nut diseases. Produces 33-38 nuts per lb. Ripens in October. Zones 5A-9A.

**MORELAND – TYPE II** An excellent disease-resistant tree that will produce large, top-quality nuts. Moreland is a papershell of the same size and shape as Stuart. The nuts are heavy, averaging 60 nuts per pound with excellent kernel fill out. Oil content is extremely high, which gives it an extra rich flavor and good keeping qualities. Ripens late October. Zones 5A-9A.