



GEORGIA PECAN COMMISSION

Pecan Industry Fact Sheet

- › The pecan is the only tree nut that's truly native to the United States, and the United States produces more than 80 percent of the world's pecans.
- › The pecan, *Carya illinoensis*, is a species of hickory and is one of the largest fruit-bearing trees.
- › The pecan tree is a large deciduous tree, growing to 66-130 feet (20-40 m) high.
- › There are more than 500 varieties of pecans, but only a few are common. Varieties commonly planted in Georgia orchards include Cape Fear, Desirable, Elliott, Schley, Stuart and Sumner.
- › "Pecan" is from an Algonquin word meaning "a nut requiring a stone to crack."
- › Pecans were trees were cultivated by Georgia Washington and Thomas Jefferson.
- › Pecan production has steadily increased in the United States since 1925, rising from 2.2 million pounds in 1920 to more than 256 million pounds in 2010. That crop had a value of \$556 million.
- › One irrigated, managed acre of trees will produce about 1,000 pounds of pecans.
- › Before 1920, when mechanical shelling machines were introduced, pecans were "hand-shelled" by consumers who removed the shell themselves.
- › With the development of commercial shelling equipment in the early 1920s, commercial pecan processing was developed, along with equipment used for sizing, separation of faulty meats and shells, cracking, grading of meats, drying and packaging.
- › Large pecan plants have cracking machines with a capacity of 150,000 pounds a day and 30 million pounds a season.
- › Shelling facilities usually have a cold storage facility. Some are capable of holding several million pounds of shelled and unshelled nuts.
- › Asian demand for pecans is strong - the Chinese refer to pecans as "the longevity nut."
- › Pecans are regarded as the most important commercial nut crop grown in the eastern United States.
- › The 2010 U.S. crop was 259.7 million pounds valued at \$556 million:
 - The United States exported 40,622 metric tons of unshelled, or in-shell, pecans valued at \$143 million.
 - The United States also exported 12,948 metric tons of shelled pecans valued at nearly \$109 million.