Pecans

Pecan trees can be found throughout Florida, although most of the total acreage (6,500 acres) is located in north Florida. During the last several decades, pecan breeding programs have produced new grafted cultivars and today there are more than 500 pecan cultivars, each with unique traits. The majority of the production statewide is not well managed in respect to irrigation and pest management, and therefore the quality and quantity of the pecan crop is reduced.

Fertilizing

Pecan trees are fertilized with a 10-10-10 fertilizer that contains added micronutrients, particularly Zinc, to prevent nutrient deficiencies. Fertilizer amounts and application times vary based on the age of the tree:

Newly planted trees:

A soil fertility test should be conducted prior to planting and no fertilizer should be placed in the planting hole during installation. Do not apply fertilizer in a clump around the base of tree, instead spread out the fertilizer in a circle with a 3- to 5- foot diameter around the trunk of the tree. Avoid putting any fertilizer directly against the trunk.

- **Year 1:** Fertilize in early March and early June using 10-10-10 with micronutrients, 1 pound (2 cups) per tree.
- **Year 2:** Fertilize in early March and early June using 10-10-10 with micronutrients, 2 pounds (4 cups) per tree.

Established trees:

Some growers prefer to bury fertilizer at 10 or more sites below the tree canopy to reduce runoff and increase fertilizer use efficiency compared to a broadcast application. Established trees are fertilized according to nutrient test results. Otherwise, use general recommendations: Fertilize in February and June using 10-10-10 with micronutrients, 2 pounds (4 cups) per inch trunk diameter, measured one foot above the soil (2-4 lbs for bearing trees). Large trees (30 inches or more in diameter) may require 60 to 120 pounds of fertilizer.
Pruning

Pecan trees should be trained to a central leader training system. For information on training newly planted trees, see: https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/hs229.

Mature pecan trees are not routinely pruned, but can be pruned to facilitate continued tree productivity as adjacent trees become crowded in the orchard. During the dormant season, prune all limbs closer than 5 feet from the soil surface. The cut should not be flush but rather a sufficient distance from the branch to create a stub that will eventually be covered with bark tissue, otherwise the location of the pruned-off limb will sustain wood rot and eventually leave a hole in the trunk. The crotch angle is the angle the lateral branch makes with the central leader. Crotch angles between 70 and 90 degrees are preferred, and narrow or Y angles, are to be avoided because they are prone to breakage. For narrow or Y angles, remove one of the shoots early in development, preferably during the first year that they form. There is usually a reduction in yield associated with pruning that may last several years. Yield can be essentially zero for three years of growth after scaffold limbs are pruned to stubs. Severe pruning can promote a return of the tree to a juvenile (non-reproductive) state. A reduction in yield with pruning will also occur for trees destined for eventual tree removal.

UF/IFAS Publications

The Pecan Tree

Carya illinoensis: Pecan

Pecan Cultivars for North Florida

Sustainability Assessment of Fruit Crops for North and North Central Florida

Pecan Pest Insects