PECAN TREE CARE

POLLINATION: Pecan trees are pollinated by the wind. Plant at least 2 varieties together for maximum pollination and production.

SITE: Location is important because of the mature size and spread of the trees. Plant well away from residence and other buildings. Consider overhead power lines. Space trees at least 60-80 ft. apart. Do not plant shrubs underneath as these will compete for moisture and nutrients.

PLANTING: Dig the hole twice the size and the same depth as the pot. Amend soil as needed. Plant so that the top of the root ball extends 2 inches above ground level (settling will occur). Fill the hole with soil; construct a basin/reservoir around the tree; water thoroughly. The reservoir should hold 10-15 gallons of water. Add 2-3" of mulch.

FERTILIZING: For newly planted trees, use approximately 1 lb. of 10-10-10 fertilizer immediately after planting and again in June or July. The following February, apply 4 lbs. of 10-10-10 for each inch of trunk diameter. Young trees should grow 2-4 ft/year. Where growth is less, apply 1 lb. of ammonium nitrate fertilizer per inch of trunk diameter in June or July. For the first 3 years after planting, apply 1 lb. of zinc sulfate in June or July. For mature trees, apply 3-5 lbs. of zinc sulfate yearly. (See Common Problems)

COMMON PROBLEMS: Lack of pollination causes the greatest loss of nuts. Excessive rain during bloom prevents pollination and the un-pollinated nuts fall. Weather conditions may cause the male and female flowers to mature at different periods and pollination fails to occur. Drought often causes early drop of nuts. Watering is extremely important when mother nature doesn't provide, especially in the first 2 or 3 years. Young pecan trees need 10-15 gallons of water per week. Lack of nutrients and fertilizer can contribute to poor yields and early drop. Follow recommended fertilizing practices.

Common symptoms of zinc deficiency (rosette) are bronzing and mottling of leaves, dead twigs in tops of trees, abnormally small pecans, rosettes of small, yellowish-green leaves. A soil pH of 6.0 to 6.5 assures the availability of essential nutrients. Kits for leaf tissue analysis are available through Clemson Extension Service.

Insect damage can cause premature loss of nuts. Nut casebearer, black aphids, pecans weevils are common culprits. In addition, scab, powdery mildew, blotch and other diseases can cause nut drop. On young trees, when disease or insect damage is present in the growing season, apply fungicide or insecticide. Follow instructions and repeat as necessary. On larger trees, it is more difficult to effectively apply fungicide and insecticide. In this case, the best approach is to apply a systemic product (works through the root system) in the early spring.

PECAN SCAB

PECAN WEEVIL

The pecan weevil is a reddish-brown weevil about 3/8" long and is one of the most destructive pests of pecan nuts.

The adult has a long snout, which is used to feed on the developing pecan nut. The adults emerge from the ground mid to late summer to feed on the young nuts, which will cause some to fall to the ground prematurely.

The adult pecan weevils also damage pecans by laying their eggs inside the pecan shell. The eggs will develop into cream-colored grubs (larvae) that feed on the nut. This feeding will occur for several weeks before the nut falls out of the tree. Once the nuts are on the ground, the larvae will bore an 1/8" inch hole in the pecan shell to leave the pecan and enter into the soil. The larvae burrows 12 inches into the soil, where it will overwinter.

Concentrate efforts on sanitation by picking up prematurely fallen nuts on a weekly basis to help break the life cycle of the pecan weevils.

Research has determined that 5 percent of adult pecan weevils walk up the trunk of the tree, 77 percent fly onto the trunk at a height of 6 to 8 feet and 15 percent fly directly on to lower branches. To capture those that crawl and fly onto the trunk, use a tacky barrier like *Tanglefoot.* Apply it in July and August in a 3-inch band around the trunk, 6 to 8 feet up the tree to prevent re-infestation.