

SOUTHEAST GEORGIA PECAN PRESS

*The Official Newsletter of the UGA Cooperative Extension
Pecan Agent Team*



Dodge County

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2025 PECAN COUNTY MEETING SCHEDULE

January 28 - Evans/Tattnall

January 30 - Appling

February 4 - Crisp

February 11 - Montgomery/
Toombs/Treutlen

February 13 - Colquitt

February 17 - Grady

February 18 - Peach

February 25 - Laurens

February 26 - Sumpter

March 4 - Cook

March 6 - Randolph

March 11 - Thomas

March 12 - Berrien

March 13 - Ben Hill / Irwin
(Breakfast)

March 13 - Mitchell
(Lunch)

March 20 - Daugherty
(Supper)

*All meetings will be at noon
unless otherwise specified.
For details regarding meeting
location, please contact the
respected county extension
office for that county.*

TREE RIGHTING VS. REMOVAL

By Dr. Lenny Wells, UGA Pecan Horticulturalist

In the Southeastern Pecan Handbook, there is a section on righting or removing storm damaged trees. It comes down to the size of the tree and its degree lean. Though trees appear look good up top, root damage can be significant.

Bearing trees older than 6-7 years old and leaning more than about 30 degrees generally will not be worth trying to stand back up (Figure 1). If this is attempted, be sure to cut the tops of the trees back significantly before righting. This is the only chance for the tree to survive. The further the lean and larger the tree, the less likelihood of righting successfully. They simply lose too much root - first when leaned over by the wind and secondarily as it is righted - to supply the tree with the water and nutrients needed for survival. Righted trees often die back slowly or blow over again in the next storm. **Trees that have only a slight lean (< 20 degrees) and remain green and secured by their roots will likely survive better without righting.**



Figure 1. Seven-year 'Pawnee' between 30 and 40 degree lean in Washington County

PRUNING TREES AFTER YEAR FIVE

By Andrew Sawyer, Area Pecan Agent

It is important that we prune trees the first four years. We sometimes get busy and miss a year, however. Pecan trees put on significant branching the 4th year. Without a strong central leader, we can see closer branch angles which result in a more straight up growth and reduce interior sunlight. It is much more difficult to prune trees after this point.

The photos on the right demonstrate as well as it could be written. The focus remains the same if you are pruning trees in their 3rd and 4th year:

- Determine a central leader
- Remove branches below your head
- Remove tight angle branches on the main trunk

One way I think about it is that the structure of pruning has to do with sunlight. Simply put, flat branches receive more sunlight. Once trees reach the third year, we no longer top them. This allows the hormone auxin, traveling the top bud down, to structure those lateral branches on the tree. Laurens County grower Dennis Holley prunes a vigorous, 6-year-old 'Caddo' two years ago (Figures 2 & 3).



Figure 2. Before



Figure 3. After

AT-PLANT NEMATODE CONSIDERATIONS

By Dr. Tim Brenneman, Pathologist & Andrew Sawyer, Area Pecan Agent

During our 2024 county meetings, UGA Pathologist Dr. Tim Brenneman discussed the need for further nematode research. While other nematodes may possibly be harmful, it is clear that root knot nematode can be extremely damaging. A recent UGA survey of pecan orchards in 25 counties in Georgia showed some presence of root knot nematodes in every orchard, even those in north Georgia. By this time, Dr. Brenneman had completed the third year of an ongoing study comparing multiple fumigants and at-plant treatments in Peach County. He has observed them in multiple other sites as well.

In my first year serving as Area Pecan Agent, I learned that nematodes are more of an issue than we realize since the primary damage is below ground. If you have portions of your orchard stunted and slow growing, you inevitably check the trees by digging up some

roots. If you find distinct galling and lack of fine root development, those trees may need to be removed. Of course you can also pull a standard soil sample from around suspected trees and send to the UGA Nematode Lab for analysis. Just be aware that other species such as peanut or cotton root knot nematode look identical to pecan root knot and may show up in the counts.

Nematodes are microscopic worms that feed on plant roots. Some burrow into the root where they cause great damage. Pecan root-knot nematode (*Meloidogyne partityla*) lives on the outside of the root but inside a gall (Figure 4), greatly disrupting root function. Of all the nematode species that are known to be present on pecan, root-knot is the one of greatest concern. The damage is most apparent on young trees and is most likely to occur in sandy soils. This species of root knot is only known to infect trees such as pecan, oaks, hickories, etc. It should not be a problem following vegetables or row crop plantings where other species of root knot might be present.

Treatment Options

We can replace a tree infected with nematodes, but what about the nematodes in the soil? If symptoms are not severe it may be possible to remediate the trees by injecting Velum nematicide through the irrigation system. These applications are labeled, but we have very little experience with them in pecans.

To treat the soil, it is either 1) pre-plant fumigation or 2) an at-plant treatment. Fumigants are custom applied, the only option currently available is Tri-Est in Tifton. These must be applied in t



Figure 4. Nodules of root-knot nematode on newly planted pecan.

AT-PLANT NEMATODE CONSIDERATIONS CONT..

By Dr. Tim Brenneman, Pathologist & Andrew Sawyer, Area Pecan Agent

the fall before planting and are relatively expensive on a per acre basis. An at-plant treatment would likely be a better option and can be done by the grower. Salibro was recently labeled for non-bearing trees but there is little data on pecans. We have labels on a few products at this time, but we do not have research on all of them. Dr. Brenneman has seen some very promising results with Velum at-planting. The key is to apply it at the labeled rate (6.84 fl oz per acre). Simply divide that rate by the number of trees per acre and apply it in the hole while planting the tree into the transplant water. Once the water moves down through the soil, the compound binds to the soil and also soaks in to the roots. It is a great do-it-yourself remedy if you have known nematodes. What about a post-plant treatment?

These compounds may move down through the soil after surface application after applied over the top of the tree roots, but how far down does the product need to reach? Though nematodes can be found at least six feet under the soil, the nematode damage for our young trees mainly occurs near the top of the soil profile. This is because the feeder roots grow up from the lateral roots to the surface. If we can treat that part of the soil, the treatment would be effective. In 2024, we applied a test comparing Salibro (Corteva) and Velum (Bayer) to a control in Montgomery County (Figure 5). We had a number of newly planted trees in an area with persistent nematodes. Though it appears nematode numbers were reduced by both treatments, our overall data was not significantly different since nematode populations in the control trees also went down.

We are just starting much of this research, and much needs to be learned. Our goal is to continue working with other do-it-yourself products as we know they can provide a reliable control option. In each nematode situation I observe, a do-it-yourself treatment would provide a reliable control option and allow us to move forward on these orchards. These at-plant treatments may need to be combined with post-plant applications as well. The most important first step is identifying those sites with a significant nematode problem. Once the problem is identified, a strategy can be developed to try and treat those trees and continue growing them.



Figure 5. Do-it-yourself application of Salibro in 2024 nematode test.

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UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA
EXTENSION

Upcoming Events

February 20 - 22, 2025 - **Southeastern Pecan Grower's Association Conference** - San Destin, FL

March 2 - 4, 2025 - **Western Pecan Grower's Association Conference** - Las Cruces, NM

