

Pecans

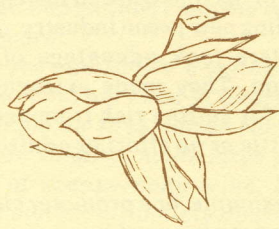
Compared with other orchard crops, Georgia's pecan industry is relatively new. It has developed from small three and four tree orchards to its present magnitude primarily during this century.

The pecan is native to the United States, originating in the Mississippi Valley region. Like many other crops, the nuts were probably introduced to Georgia by the Indians.

North American Indians are said to have pounded pecan kernels, added them to boiling water and used the mixture as seasoning for food. The mixture also was used to thicken venison broth, season hominy and in some cases allowed to ferment an intoxicating drink popular in tribal festivities. Eventually, the natives introduced pecans to early settlers and began exchanging the nuts for trinkets and tools.

Georgia's commercial pecan production began during the late 1800's. In 1886, the Southern Cultivator reported that several individuals successfully had produced and marketed pecans on a small scale near Savannah. Nelson Tift established a 500 tree orchard in 1887 near Albany which he expanded to 2500 trees within two years. By 1889 there were 97 acres of pecans planted throughout Georgia compared with 1000 acres in Mississippi and 2000 acres in Louisiana.

The years 1880 through 1900 were often considered the "Golden Years" of horticulture in the South. G.M. Bacon of DeWitt, S.W. Peck of Hartwell, and James Tift and J.P. Gill of Albany were considered pioneers in the early development of Georgia's pecan industry. In addition, H.P. Stuckey, director of Georgia's Agri-



cultural Experiment Station, conducted pecan research in a day when the nuts faced an uncertain future. The success of the states' pecan industry can be partly attributed to his early efforts.

As a result of the growing interest in the pecan industry, the Southern Nut Growers Association was established in Albany in 1901. Later the group became known as the National Nut Growers Association.

The Georgia/Florida Pecan Growers held their first convention in 1907 and continued through 1933. This group was the parent organization for the Southeastern Pecan Growers Association which was established in 1934 and is still active today.

By 1905, there were several thousand acres of pecans across the state. These orchards provided a solid foundation for the further development of the industry.

Over 450,000 had been established in the Albany area by 1910. After that, plantings seemed to be continuous with more than 1,000,000 trees planted by 1920. Production also increased from approximately 27,000