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Lee County Ag Newsletter

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Let Us Know If You Want to Continue to Receive Newsletters

Our mailing list has over 300 names and addresses on it. In an effort to trim it down, we are asking everyone who would like to continue receiving newsletters and production meeting schedules to call Courtney at 759-6025 or email her at uge4177@uga.edu

Crop Production Guides

The cotton and corn production guides are now available in our office. The Row Crop Planter Checklist is also available in our office.

Production Meetings

Due to the pandemic, all production meetings are being held virtually. To be a part of these meetings, you must register at least 18 hours before the start of the meeting. Use the registration link below the meetings you want to attend to register. After registering, you will receive a Zoom link for the meeting. The remaining meetings are listed below.

Corn and Soybeans

January 29 9:30 a.m. until 12:00 noon

February 16 6:00 p.m. until 8:30 p.m.

https://ugacornandsoybean2021.eventbrite.com/

Peanut

February 3 9:30 a.m. until 12:00 noon

February 18 6:00 p.m. until 8:30 p.m.

February 22 9:30 until 12:00 noon

https://2021ugapeanut.eventbrite.com

Cotton

February 2 6:00 p.m. until 8:30 p.m.

February 24 9:30 until 12:00 noon

https://2021ugacotton.eventbrite.com

Pecan

February 9 9:00 a.m.

March 9 6:00 p.m.

https://ugapecan2021.eventbrite.com

Pesticide license credit will be available for these meetings. CCA credit will be available for some of them.

Production Meeting Viewing Opportunities

To accommodate people who may not be able to watch virtual production meetings on a computer, the Lee County Extension Office will be offering meeting viewing opportunities at the office. For everyone's safety, masks must be worn and social distancing observed. To facilitate social distancing, the number of attendees at each session will be limited. Reservations **must** be made in order to attend a meeting. Please call 759-6025 to reserve a spot at a meeting. Pesticide credit will be awarded for at least some of these meetings. No meals or refreshments will be served. The following are meetings that will be available for viewing at the office:

Corn and Soybean February 16 6:00 p.m.-8:30 p.m.

Cotton	February 24	9:30 p.m.-12:00 noon
Peanut	February 22	9:30 p.m.-12:00 noon
Pecan	February 9	9:00 a.m.

Georgia Clean Day

The Georgia Department of Agriculture, with funding from the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency, is conducting a collection of unwanted pesticides. The program is free for participants and is intended for farmers, lawn care professionals, golf courses, and pest control companies throughout the state. The collection will take place at the Mitchell County Stadium located at 45 Industrial Boulevard in Camilla, Georgia. The collection will take place on February 10, 2021 from 9:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. Persons who want to participate in the program must register by completing the required form and listing all pesticides to be submitted for collection. Containers containing unknown pesticides can be listed as "unknown" on the form. Any pesticides not listed on the form will not be accepted. No compressed gasses will be accepted. The form must be returned to Rick Hayes, the Clean Day Waste Coordinator, by February 5, 2021. The forms may be picked up at our office or emailed to you upon request. Because this is a first come, first serve program, and because the deadline is fast approaching for application submission, I will be glad to scan and email applications to the Georgia Department of Agriculture.

Enlist™ Soybean Variety Data – 2020 (Dr. EricProstko)

UGA-OVT just recently released the results of their 2020 soybean yield trials. In those trials, several Enlist™ (2,4-D choline tolerant) varieties were included. There has not been much Georgia generated data about the performance of Enlist™ soybean varieties in our state. A quick summary of those Enlist™ varieties is presented in the following table.

Table 1. Enlist Soybean Variety Performance in Georgia – 2020.

Variety	Statewide Average Yield (Bu/A)	Maturity Group Average (Bu/A)
DM 48E73	48.3	47.9
AGS 48E19	54.1	47.9

MS 4800E	52.5	47.9
DM 59E01	65.1	62.5
ZS 5098E3	64.0	62.5
MS 5110E	60.7	62.5
AGS 51E19	61.9	62.5
DM 51E01	61.6	61.7

Five of the eight Enlist™ soybean varieties in these tests had higher yields than the maturity group average. To get the full report of the preliminary 2020 UGA-OVT soybean yield results, check out this link: https://swvt.uga.edu/content/dam/caes-subsite/statewide-variety-testing/docs/performance-trials/2020/soybean-prelim-2020-tables.pdf

Row Crop Budgets

Row crop budgets can be accessed at https://agecon.uga.edu/extension/budgets.html

Profitability of 'Lakota' pecan (Dr. Lenny Wells)

The top concern on growers' minds right now is reducing the cost of production. Here in the Southeast, over 12% of the variable cost of production comes from the cost of fungicide to control pecan scab. Its the highest single annual expense outside labor costs. Fuel follows closely behind.

If we could eliminate or drastically reduce these inputs, we could significantly increase the net profit of growing pecans. For the last 3 years we've kept track of yield, quality, price, input costs, and net returns on 3 cultivars in our low-input trial at the UGA Ponder Research Farm. These trees were planted at 40 X 40 in 2008 and **have not received any fungicide sprays at all.**

I wanted to share with you the results we are seeing in this trial because I believe they offer potential for pecan profitability even with the low prices we are currently seeing.

I will focus here on Lakota, a USDA variety released in 2007. It is a 'Major' X 'Mahan' cross. Lakota is highly precocious and prolific with medium nut size and high percent kernel and to date, a phenomenal degree of scab resistance.

‘Lakota’ pecan

The knock on Lakota has been the variation in nut size even from the same tree but since almost all pecans are sized as they come through the cleaning plant now, I don’t see this as a major problem. Another issue it faces is the fact that the kernel color turns dark in certain years. I will discuss this further later.

For now, lets focus on Lakota’s production:

Year	**Yield (lbs/A)**	**Nuts/lb**	**% kernel**	**Cost**	**Price**	**Gross $**	**Net**
2018	2058	48	60	1184.30	$1.95	$4013.10	$28
2019	394	48	57	1124.08	$2.30	$906.20	$-2
2020	4296	63	54	1024.08	$1.35	$5799.60	$47

Table 1. Yields, quality, price, cost of production, and gorss and net returns over variable cost for Lakota pecan grown with 0 insecticide sprays in a low-input trial

Yields of Lakota have been excellent and quality has been pretty good. The yields you see here are based on taking the per tree average yield and multiplying that by 27 trees per acre (40 X 40 spacing). The cost of production includes fertilizer, herbicide, and mowing. A few insecticide sprays were applied in 2018 and 2019 but none were necessary in 2020. Actual cost of production is likely a bit lower than what you see here because we did not take into account the fuel savings from having zero fungicide sprays. All prices were actual prices obtained from accumulators.

‘Lakota’ pecan with 0 fungicide sprays

As you can see, Lakota will alternate bear significantly if left unchecked. In order to alleviate this problem we fruit thinned three Lakota trees in 2020.

‘Lakota’ after fruit thinning

‘Lakota’ tree after fruit thinning

We will learn this year whether or not fruit thinning improves the return crop of ‘Lakota’. Yields and returns, etc. for thinned and non-thinned trees can be seen below.

Fruit Thinned	Yield	Nuts/lb	% kernel	Cost	Price	Gross	Net
Yes	2986	63	56	1024.08	$1.35	$4031.37	$30
No	4296	63	54	1024.08	$1.35	$5799.60	$47

Net returns of ‘Lakota’ have been exceptional in the ON year. But as you can see from Table 1 earlier, the very low off year is an issue. Still, some would say if you can net around $3000/acre on average, you can stand an off year. I would prefer to see consistent production. If we can eliminate the alternate bearing tendency of Lakota by mechanical fruit thinning or hedging and even-out production, we will have solved one of Lakota’s major issues.

The other major issue ‘Lakota’ faces is its kernel color. The kernels turn dark quickly if not harvested on time. You can see the color of the Lakota kernels from our trees in 2020 on the left in the image below as compared to Excel on the right.

Lakota pecan kernels (L) and Excel pecan kernels (R)

This is not really what you want to see and its the first year we have seen the kernels turn this dark in our trial (although I have heard others complain about this issue in the past). These nuts did lay on the ground longer

than normal this year and the trees were overloaded, which we thought may be a contributing factor. However, fruit thinning did not improve the kernel color.

If you were wanting a nut to shell for mail-order or gift pack, Lakota would certainly not be your nut of choice. However, Lakota shells out well into complete halves. I have shown the color to a few shellers and the reviews are somewhat mixed. One sheller told me he does see it as an issue. Two others have told me it won't really matter going into the domestic shelling market. I have seen similar color on Western varieties and from nuts out of Mexico as well. One sheller even told me that its only folks in Georgia who are hung up on the color and that much of the commercial shelling market won't care. The question becomes, how much of this would the market bear?

So, is there a place for 'Lakota'? Although I am somewhat tentative since we only have 3 years worth of data and the color issue is still concerning, based on the actual numbers we see, I would say yes. When you can grow them this cheap, you don't have to get a high price to be profitable. Even when compared with Desirable and Pawnee, no other cultivar I see except perhaps 'Creek' can generate the volume and income of 'Lakota' with such a low cost of production. Production and prices for the two would be very similar, you will have to manage crop load on both, and both can be grown with a light spray program. I don't know of many crops in the SE, much less pecan varieties, from which you can generate $3000 per acre or more in net returns. Though I have not shared them here, the numbers for 'Excel' have looked nearly as good, bumping up on almost $3000 per acre net. However, in the absence of an in-shell market, the price of Excel has been lower than for Lakota most years as a result of the difficulty in shelling them out into complete halves.

Even though we did not spray the Lakota in this trial I would not advise making zero fungicide sprays in a commercial orchard setting. We see powdery mildew on Lakota and while it does not seem to have affected our yields or quality to date, left unchecked it could develop into an issue over time. In addition, a minimal scab program would likely help protect Lakota's current scab resistance. I would recommend making 2 to 3 fungicide sprays with Lakota.

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