Pecans in New Mexico

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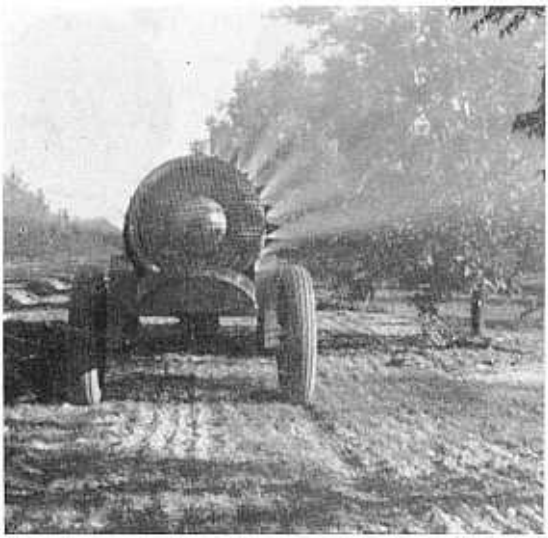
Commercial pecan production in New Mexico is limited to the southern irrigated valleys of the state, and is localized principally in the Mesilla Valley of Dona Ana County. Plantings of lesser importance are found in the irrigated areas of Otero, Roosevelt, Sierra and Eddy counties.

The Mesilla Valley, which contains over 90 per cent of the commercial pecan acreage in the state, is at an elevation of 3900 feet and has a growing season of about 200 days. The valley is very favorably situated for pecan production. Because of its arid climate and relatively isolated location from other pecan producing areas, there are no fungus diseases and only two insect pests of importance. These are the black pecan aphid (**Melanocallis caryaefoliae**—Davis), and the walnut aphid (**Chromaphis juglandicola**—Kalt). Although the damage caused by these insects is rather severe in some seasons, they are relatively easy pests to control when a proper control program is employed. No other pecan disease or insect pests have been reported from the Mesilla Valley.

First Plantings in Civil War Days

Isolated plantings of a few seedling trees were made in the Mesilla Valley area about the time of the Civil War, but the first orchard of budded varieties was set out in 1908 by Mr. C. P. Wilson, near Mesilla Park, New Mexico. Since that time, rather extensive plantings have been made, so that at present, there are about 5,000 acres planted to pecans in the Mesilla Valley area. About 4,000 of these are owned by Mr. D. F. Stahmann of Santa Tomas, New Mexico. A majority of the trees in the Stahmann orchards are between 10 and 15 years old.

Varieties planted in the original Wilson orchard included Frotscher, Schley, Stuart, VanDeman, Moneymaker, Colorado, San Saba and Covereign (Texas Prolific). Within recent years, a number of other varieties have been tested by the New Mexico Experiment Station as well as by several propressive



An air blast sprayer in operation to control Black Pecan Aphid in the Stahmann orchards of Stanta Tomas, New Mexico.

pecan growers. The results of these tests indicate that the following varieties are worthy of comment.

Western (Western Schley)—This, as its name indicates, is a western variety. It was developed in West Texas as a seedling of San Saba. At the present time it is one of the most important varieties for New Mexico. The tree grows rather vigorously and comes into production at a fairly early age. The nuts are long and narrow, and taper to a blunt point at the basal end. They have a thin shell, and fill well in most seasons. While the Western shows a slight tendency for alternate bearing, it has been a fairly constant producer It varies from 67 to 79 nuts to the pound, and contains from 57 to 61 per cent kernel. The Western is considered a mid-season variety under Mesilla Valley conditions.

Western Schley, one of the most important pecan varieties in New Mexico.

Burkett — This is another variety of western origin which is widely planted in the irrigated valleys of southern New Mexico. The nuts are large and nearly round. There is an average of 48 to 55 nuts to the pound, and the kernel content ranges from 55 to 58 per cent. The shell is thin and the kernels are rather easily removed from the shell in halves. The Burkett is a little late for the Mesilla Valley area, and in some seasons it produces some poorly filled nuts.

Onliwon — This variety, while not widely planted by New Mexico growers, has been outstanding in the Experiment Station orchards. It has produced large quantities of excellent quality nuts. The nuts are extremely thin shelled, round with a slight tapering at the apex and of medium size. In a pound there are usually from 65-90 nuts which contain from 62 to 66 per cent kernel. The kernels are a bright golden color, plump, and are very easily removed from the shell in halves. The nuts mature in late mid-season.

Success—One of the so-called eastern varieties, originating in Mississippi. The nuts are large, roundish-oblong, and have averaged from 54-63 to the pound, with a cracking percentage of 51-55 per cent. The shell is of medium

thickness, the kernels are plump, smooth, and are fairly easily removed from the shell. The tree is fairly productive under New Mexico conditions.

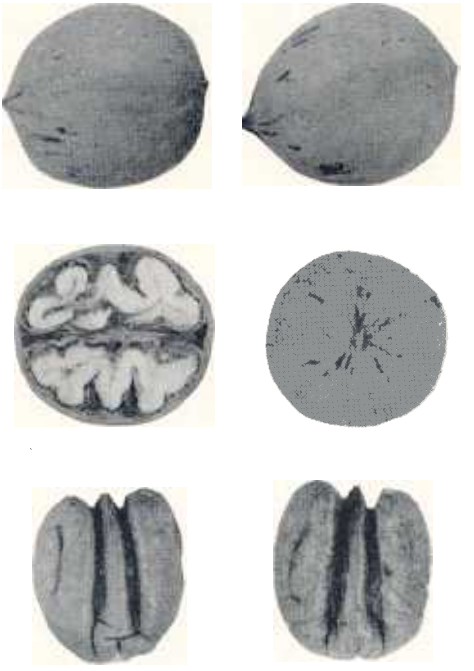
Stuart—Another variety of Mississippi origin which grows reasonably well in New Mexico. The nuts are oblong, medium to large, averaging 48 to 55 to the pound. Although the shell is rather thick, and the kernel percentage is only 48-51, the kernels are attractive and of good flavor. The Stuart is only moderately productive.

Texas Prolific — A late mid-season variety, which produces very well under New Mexico conditions. The nuts are medium in size, averaging from 70-78 to the pound. The cracking percentage of Texas Prolific is 54-58 per cent. The shell is of medium thickness.

San Saba Improved—An early maturing, thin-shelled variety, with an attractive high quality kernel. The nuts range from 65 to 80 to the pound, with a kernel content of from 60 to 63 per cent. It has been only moderately productive in New Mexico.

Bradley — A medium-to-small nut with a very thin shell and an excellent kernel as to flavor and color. Nuts average from 65 to 80 to the pound, and a kernel content of 60 to 63 per cent.

Mahan — One of the largest of the budded varieties being grown but is not adapted to New Mexico conditions. It is very late in maturing and the kernels seldom develop properly. Moreover, it definitely bears biennially in New Mexico.



Burkett, a large round pecan which is widely planted in the irrigated valleys of southern New Mexico.

Other varieties which have produced good crops of well-filled nuts in the college orchard are Moneymaker, Pabst, John Garner, Oklahoma, Humble, Delmas and Squirrels Delight.