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Fertilizing pecan trees, for now and later

Following a successful 2011 season, many pecan growers across Arizona are using this alternate bearing year as an excuse to cut back on fertilizing. But most industry experts would say that's a bad idea.

"After a heavy 'on' year, the trees just don't have the energy to come back with another big crop, and growers are used to that," says Steve Fenn, an independent PCA who works out of the Fertizona branch in Willcox, Ariz. "But that doesn't mean you shouldn't be feeding them now. If you don't have adequate fertilizer this year, it could make subsequent years less productive."

Based on his experience, Fenn believes in maintaining off-year fertilizer levels

at 80 percent of what you'd apply in a good bearing season. "That helps to mitigate the production extremes from one year to the next," he says.

Many good options

Fenn—who personally serves about half of Arizona's 15,000 pecan acres—recommends applying fertilizer four times a year. The first application should be in April, coming in between the first and second irrigations. His product of choice is a dry 46-0-0 urea with 50 units of nitrogen per application.

He also recommends a banded application, injected lightly into the soil just inside the trees' drip line. "When you band the application like that, you're getting more fertilizer

closer to the tree roots," Fenn says, "instead of putting nitrogen across the entire orchard floor."

"A good rule of thumb in pecans is that ten pounds of nuts require one pound of nitrogen," says Don Platt, a PCA at Fertizona – Casa Grande. "And that's true in both on years and off years."

Many of Platt's pecan-growing customers have micro-irrigation systems, so he often recommends a liquid fertilizer applied through the sprinklers. A popular and proven choice is UAN-32, which provides the highest nitrogen content of any liquid fertilizer. As for rates, timing and frequency of applications, he says those decisions depend on the soil and other growing conditions.

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Controlled-Release Technologies

This Could Be Our Future

I know people are working to promote controlled-release products. We have experience with one product due to success in the golf course and T&O markets, but we need to do more trial work to see which technologies, application methods, rates, etc., work here in the high temperatures of Southwest agriculture.

Therefore we need to proceed with caution before we decide on a proper course. Currently, with higher nitrogen prices there is a lot of speculation about which product might work best. Because of this, this can lead to a skewed view of what might “actually work.” For instance if nitrogen prices go down, then no one will think anything about controlled-release fertilizers anymore. The big ‘if’ will always be if the

amount of N (nitrogen) regulated and what might come out of that for cultural practices. We think a lot of work still needs to be done on this in a timely and methodical manner that makes sense for the Desert Southwest.

For the time being, the only proven products are from Koch Nitrogen and Agrium. We have experience with products called UFLEXX, UMAXX and Agrotain. Agrotain looks very promising in the agricultural field.

As we gain experience in this product line and technology, we will continue to share our experiences as we go along because I feel this is a trend in agriculture. With current prices and possible regulations, this could be our future.

As always, we will continue to provide you with knowledge as well as products and services.

— Jim Compton

President, Fertizona and Compton Ag Services



Fertilizing Pecan Trees

“If you don’t have adequate fertilizer this year, it could make subsequent years less productive.”

— Steve Fenn, independent PCA,
Fertizona – Willcox, Ariz.

Story continued from cover

Platt agrees that the first fertilizer application should be in April. Beyond that, many other factors determine how the nutrients will be implemented. “A fertilizer program depends on the previous year’s yield and the current year’s projections,” he says. “Everybody’s different.”

Analyzing nutrient content

Having a soil analysis is an important step in determining your crop’s nutrient needs. A foliar analysis is another useful tool in an effective fertilizer program. Sometimes a nutrient may be present in the soil but not readily available to the tree because of soil pH. Foliar analysis can accurately show which nutrients are missing from a tree’s diet.

Another thing to consider is that over-fertilizing might lead to other problems. Research indicates that too much nitrogen

in pecan trees can cause excessive vegetative growth, resulting in reduced bloom and nut set.

A lot of decisions go into successful pecan growing, and you have to be careful when and how you make them. As Fenn points out, “In a row crop, a mistake lasts for just that crop, but if you do something wrong with pecans, you have to live with your mistakes for many seasons.”

Talk to your Fertizona or Compton Ag Services representative about selection and timing of the right fertilizers for you, or contact Steve Fenn at 520-507-2286 or Don Platt at 602-757-3937 for more information.

Furst™ Liquid Fertilizer

Enhance nutrient efficiency and spring green-up of turfgrass

As Bermudagrass comes out of dormancy, now is the perfect time to optimize your fertilizer performance for better early-season appearance and superior turf health.

“During the transition season, when the Bermudagrass is waking up, it really helps to give it an extra push,” says Gari Scherting, Turf Management Specialist, Fertizona – Fennemore. “Turfgrass managers are going to be fertilizing now anyway, and Fertizona has products to improve the performance of the nutrients they’re already applying.”

One example is the option to impregnate granular ammonium sulfate with Furst™ Liquid fertilizer. Based on proprietary nutritional technology, Furst Liquid is a patented combination of amino acids and proteins which activate several beneficial biological and environmental responses in turfgrass and other plants.

“Ammonium sulfate is a popular, reliable, effective fertilizer,” says Scherting. “Adding Furst to it just makes it even better.”

Furst helps to stimulate fertilizer uptake through the turfgrass roots and generate new root development. By enhancing the efficiency of available nitrogen and other nutrients, Furst Liquid basically makes your fertilizer work harder.

“For the best results at this time of the year, you want to push that Bermudagrass now,” Scherting emphasizes. “Not only does Furst

give you faster color, but it helps the turf to fill in any spots that haven’t quite come back yet.”

Furst Liquid can be impregnated onto any uncoated dry fertilizer, and it’s also available in a variety of pre-mixed foliar nutrient sprays to supplement your regular fertilizer.

Correcting nutrient deficiencies

Another critical part of a turfgrass fertilizer program is a mineral supplement, such as Ferti-Iron Plus from Fertizona. Applied at a rate of 2-4 fluid ounces per 1,000 sq. ft. when grass is growing rapidly, Ferti-Iron Plus provides valuable, needed iron to compensate for mineral shortages typically found in high-alkaline desert soils.

“Adding iron in the transition period can make a big difference now, but it’s even more important later,” Scherting explains. “If you’re overseeding in the fall with ryegrass, which is a cool-season

variety, you’ll want the added iron then to promote green turf all year-round.”

As a turfgrass specialist,

Scherting works with many golf course superintendents and managers of athletic fields, including several Major League Baseball teams. “They come down here for spring training, and they have very specialized fields,” Scherting says. “Fortunately, they trust Fertizona for the products they need to keep their playing turf in top condition.”



Late-season nitrogen on wheat

Fertilize now to boost protein content

If you grow durum wheat for pasta, you definitely want to add another application of nitrogen to your crop now. Buyers and marketers pay a premium for higher protein content in wheat, and supplemental late-season nitrogen has proved to raise protein levels.

The most critical time to apply extra nitrogen is at the early flowering stage or up to two weeks later. That usually translates to mid-April on December-planted wheat. Studies prove that applying 40 pounds per acre of nitrogen at flowering can increase protein by as much as one percent or more, when used as part of an ongoing fertility program.

Furst™ Liquid from Fertizona is an excellent choice to help assure good protein content in your wheat.

Talk to your Fertizona or Compton Ag Services representative about Furst, or visit www.furstliquid.com for more information.

Ferti-Verde Bermudagrass Blend

Fertizona offers lower-cost pasture options

Horse and cattle owners are discovering the advantages of planting Ferti-Verde Bermudagrass seed for their pastures. Ferti-Verde is a balanced blend of common and giant Bermudagrass that provides an economical alternative to buying hay, and it's hardy enough to handle Arizona summers.

"Ferti-Verde actually likes the heat," says Tyke Bennett, Seed Products Sales Manager at Fertizona. "Once it's established, it's like a tropical plant, and it's as tough as a weed. Ferti-Verde looks good, too. It stays green in the summer."

For pasture use, the timing is perfect for Ferti-Verde Bermudagrass because hay prices have increased significantly. "Two years ago, hay wasn't expensive at all," says Bennett, "but there was a late freeze last year that cost growers a cutting, and then there were wind problems that affected the pollinating bees." As a result, hay crops were much smaller than usual, and the limited available supply was demanding high prices everywhere.

"Ferti-Verde is a great choice for pasture grass," Bennett adds. "That's what it's designed for. Growers who are serious about baling would probably plant giant Bermudagrass

instead, and be willing to pay more for it. But for somebody with a few horses or a couple head of cattle, planting Ferti-Verde is a lot smarter than having to buy hay."

Growing cattle will normally gain about a half-pound to one pound per day on Ferti-Verde Bermudagrass, if no additional feed is provided for them.

"Planting Ferti-Verde is a lot smarter than having to buy hay."

- Tyke Bennett, Seed Products Sales Manager, Fertizona

Spring planting guidelines

Ferti-Verde Bermudagrass should be planted between now and mid-summer, preferably on soil that's pre-irrigated to promote germination. Bennett recommends a rate of 20 pounds per acre, and he cautions that planting depth is extremely important. For best results, the seed should be planted as near to ¼-inch deep as possible. Planting too deep can hinder the seed's performance.

Ferti-Verde is also a heavy and efficient user of nitrogen. Up to 400 pounds of actual nitrogen per acre can be used to advantage on irrigated pastures, applied in three to four uniform applications per growing season. In addition, Fertizona suggests applying 200 pounds per acre of ammonium phosphate (16-20-0) at the time of seeding. Ferti-Verde is also an excellent choice for renovating old Bermudagrass pastures.

To learn more, talk to your Fertizona or Compton Ag Services representative about the advantages of Ferti-Verde, or contact Tyke Bennett at 520-836-7477 for more information.




Ferti-Verde is designed to keep your pasture grass ready for cattle.

YUCO Gin II

Excelling with integrity ... in business and in cotton

These are exciting times for Arizona cotton growers, and YUCO Gin II in Yuma is proof.

“2011 was our best year ever, with 60,301 bales ginned,” General Manager Dwayne Alford says proudly. That impressive total includes more than 53,000 bales of Upland (short staple) cotton and more than 7,000 bales of Pima (long staple) cotton. Although the typical ginning season runs from September through November, last year’s crop kept YUCO busy until well after the first of the year.

During peak ginning periods, YUCO Gin operates 24 hours a day, six days a week, with a seasonal staff of about 35 people. On average, the employees of the gin have worked at YUCO Gin for more than 10 years, which is a great testimony to the quality of the company.

Founded in 1963, YUCO Gin was originally a growers’ co-operative, but things changed over the years as many farms switched from cotton to other crops, especially produce.

“We watched the cotton acres keep going down,” Alford says. “Today Yuma is the winter lettuce capital.” With fewer growers to support the co-op, the ginning operation was reorganized as a private company in 1990, which is how the Roman numeral II was added to its name.

Now the trend may be reversing, as many growers have increased their cotton acreage to take advantage of better markets and prices. The rise in YUCO Gin’s volume is one result.

Growing for seed

Many of the growers that YUCO Gin serves plant cotton for seed as well as lint. In fact, YUCO Gin partners with Fertizona to provide seed for their growers. Growing cotton for seed puts added pressure on the ginning operation, though.

“We have a lot of cotton varieties we deal with,” Alford explains, “and when the crops are picked, we have to segregate the varieties here at the gin.”



The team at YUCO Gin II celebrates 60,301 bales of cotton ginned in 2011.

Handling those different cotton varieties doesn’t require any special equipment, but YUCO Gin workers have to be extra careful to keep the seeds separated. “There’s a lot of control involved with the process,” Alford adds. “The integrity of the seed is very important.”

Fertizona directly benefits from the care and integrity that YUCO Gin is known for, because grower customers can then expect purity and high quality in the seed they purchase.

“Fertizona is very good at what they do,” Alford says, “and they make it efficient for us to work with them.”

For more information about YUCO Gin II, please call Dwayne Alford at 928-329-9955.

“Fertizona is very good at what they do.”

- Dwayne Alford, General Manager, YUCO Gin II

Fertizona customers can expect purity and high quality from YUCO Gin II.

Citrus Insecticide Program

Fertizona offers effective pesticide options to protect citrus yields and quality

Citrus thrips remain the number one insect threat to Arizona citrus crops, especially in the low desert, but the good news is that Fertizona has the products and experience to help you control them. Young thrips damage growers' profits by feeding on immature fruit and visibly scarring the rinds, as seen below. Even if the fruit inside is unaffected, many buyers will reject a crop or dock you for a less-than-perfect appearance.

"Everybody has thrips, there's no way around it," says Don Platt, PCA, Fertizona – Casa Grande. "It's just a question of timing your insecticide application and how many treatments you'll need."

"Growers should be scouting for thrips right now," says Gordon Goodwin, PCA, Fertizona – Yuma. "April and May are the intense time for thrips, when they're hatching out on young tender leaves. You need to treat them before they get to the fruit." Part of the problem is that the immature citrus thrips are hard to spot, especially if you don't know exactly what you're looking for. It helps to have an experienced specialist examining your trees.

"The growers are busy with things like pruning and irrigating right now," Goodwin adds, "so they need to have someone inspect for pests if they can't do it themselves."

Effective control options

Goodwin and Platt both recommend Delegate® and dimethoate, a post-patent insecticide ingredient which is available in a variety of names.

"We've had good, proven results with Delegate for the last three or four years," Goodwin says. Another excellent product Fertizona offers is Abacus® insecticide/miticide, which is effective on two other pest problems facing citrus growers: flat mites and Asian citrus psyllid (ACP). Asian citrus psyllids are a new threat. The psyllids carry deadly bacterial disease that they spread to healthy trees, and there's no cure. "Just one of those psyllids can kill a healthy tree in a couple of years," Goodwin adds.

Fortunately, the ACP species isn't well established in Arizona yet. But the risk is out there, and growers need to be extra careful when scouting for symptoms of any pests or fungal disease ... and then call Fertizona for the control products you need.

Talk to your Fertizona or Compton Ag Services representative about selection and timing of the right pesticides for you, or stop by your local branch for more information.

"Growers should be scouting for thrips right now."

- Gordon Goodwin, PCA, Fertizona – Yuma

New Hires List

Fertizona and Compton Ag are pleased to welcome the following new team members over the past year:

Oscar Castellanos
Willcox - Plant Operator

Chad Knight
Thatcher - Delivery Driver

Vincent Leos
Casa Grande - Bagging Assistant

Martin Acosta
Willcox - Plant Operator

Sarah Gartin
Willcox - Accounting Assistant

Jesus Flores
Casa Grande - Bagging Assistant

Esteban Garcia
Yuma - Delivery Driver

Jose Carrillo
Blythe - Delivery Driver

Greg Green, Jr.
Buckeye - Field Scout

Kaden Wright
Thatcher - Delivery Driver

Nathan Brawley
Thatcher - Yard Assistant

Ernesto Hernandez
Roll - Delivery Driver

Jesus Ledesma
Blythe - Delivery Driver

Kevin Walsh
Fennemore - T&O Salesperson

Daniel Richardson
Buckeye - Delivery Driver

Tim DeWitt
Fennemore - Yard Assistant/Security

Jeffrey Blackwell
Buckeye - Delivery Driver

Martin Acuna
Santan - Delivery Driver

Brandon Guilliams
Willcox - Yard Assistant

Christina Lopez
Santan - Delivery Driver

Knowing all the right steps

Versatility and a wide range of skills make Don Platt a valuable PCA



Don Platt, a Pest Control Advisor (PCA) at Fertizona – Casa Grande, used to do a lot of country dancing with his wife, Ginger. Now that they have a toddler at home and another baby on the way, there's not much time for dances, but he still makes a lot of smart moves with Fertizona's products and services.

Motivated by his skills in biological sciences, Platt attended Northern Arizona University and Arizona State University to study agronomy, entomology and plant physiology. Given those various types of training in his background, he was asked what his main area of expertise is now.

"My specialty is being flexible," Platt answered without hesitating. "I work with all kinds of crops—tree fruits and nuts, row crops, forages and even some vegetables. I've learned to do a lot of different things."

Whether that means recommending fertilizers, pesticides, seeds, irrigation

or some other customized solution to meet a certain crop's needs, Platt stays busy working with growers and PCAs across four Arizona counties (Maricopa, Navajo, Pima and Pinal). He typically logs about 50,000-55,000 miles a year calling on customers and other professionals to share his knowledge and provide support.

Platt represents a valuable blend of experience, attitude and education.

"My specialty is being flexible. I've learned to do a lot of different things."

- Don Platt, PCA, Fertizona – Casa Grande

Then he combines those skills with his own natural abilities for diagnosing an on-farm situation and instinctively knowing what the grower needs to help maximize yields and returns.

Busy family life, too

The Platts currently live in Chandler, Ariz. They have a son, Wesley, who's almost 2 years old, and they're expecting their second child in August. Ginger is a commercial airline pilot who has temporarily given up flying to be a stay-at-home mom. She and Don have been married for 17 years, after meeting at a rodeo while they were both still in college.

When he does have some spare time, hunting is his other passion, Platt says. He mostly hunts in Arizona but has actually gone to Kansas to shoot buffalo. As for his professional life, Platt says, "I couldn't ask for a better place to work than Fertizona. They're a family-oriented company, and I'm really happy to be here."



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