



Credit: American Pecan Council

# GROWING SMARTER

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NEWS & INFORMATION TO HELP YOU GROW

## Great Crops That Are Worth The Wait

### Arizona growers take pecan production to new levels

If you ask most people to name some major crops that come from the Southwest, you would probably get a lot of the same responses, such as cotton, lettuce, citrus, melons, and so on. In recent years, however, Arizona has also become a leader in the production of tree nuts, especially pecans and pistachios, and we're obviously doing it very well.

A good case in point is pecans. According to USDA statistics<sup>1</sup>, the average per-acre yield of pecans in America in 2019 was 668 pounds; in Arizona, that number was an impressive 1,920 pounds – almost three times

as much. Pecans are traditionally considered a native “Southern” crop, with widespread production in states like Georgia, Texas, and Louisiana (pecan pie was supposedly invented in New Orleans), but Arizona also has an ideal climate and soil for pecans.

“Our environment is really well-adapted to pecans, as long as we manage our water carefully,” said PCA Tyler Smith, Fertizona – Willcox. “With all of the new plantings, our pecan acres here have tripled in the last three years.”

Arizona currently has about 19,000 acres of bearable pecan trees, but that doesn't represent new, young orchards. It takes six or seven years before a healthy pecan

tree can produce a good nut crop, and about ten years to reach full maturity.

Pecan trees are naturally alternate-bearing, meaning they only produce their best crops every two years. Those “off-years” in between still generate nuts, only in much smaller quantities. Because of the reduced crops in alternate years, some growers tend to cut back on fertilizer during the less-productive seasons, but that's a mistake. Depleted nutrients from a strong harvest need to be replaced for the trees to stay healthy (see related story on page 5).

“A good rule of thumb in pecans is that every ten pounds of nuts require one pound of nitrogen,” said PCA Don Platt, Fertizona – Casa Grande.

1. [www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/Todays\\_Reports/reports/pecnpr20.pdf](http://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/Todays_Reports/reports/pecnpr20.pdf)

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# Watching Out for Each Other

One of the many positive things about living a long time is getting to build up a lot of great memories and to reflect on them with your personal historical perspective. I've been thinking about that lately as we celebrated Fertilzona's fortieth anniversary this Spring. Looking back over how far we've come and all the friendships we've developed during those years, it's made me feel very grateful and fortunate.

When we started the company in 1980, there were eight agribusiness retailers competing for business in central Arizona. Farmers had plenty of suppliers to choose from, so survival for Fertilzona meant going above and beyond what the other guys could offer.

Today there are only four companies left vying for growers' business here, and three of them are owned by corporations in other cities – or even other countries. That makes Fertilzona the “last man standing” as a genuine locally owned supplier for our industry.

There's a lot of renewed emphasis this year on communities sticking together and supporting each other during the changes we're all experiencing. That's always been a good idea, and it's part of being a conscientious neighbor. Now as global supply chains are disrupted and travel is restricted, working with folks closer to home makes even more sense.

Supporting Arizona businesses who understand your personal priorities and who contribute to the health of your community is rewarding for everybody around.

As Fertilzona moves confidently into our fifth decade – whatever the future may hold – please remember that our business family is always here to help you and your family. Thank you for your ongoing loyalty and support.

**Jim Compton**

President, Fertilzona &  
Compton Ag Services



*Story continued from cover*

Tyler, who personally serves about a dozen pecan growers, recommends starting with an early application of potassium every year, and then following later with nitrogen, phosphorus, and other nutrients. “Adding a soil application of zinc with the nitrogen shows an improvement in plant health,” he added.

“After taking care of the big fertility issues with your N-P-K, you need micronutrients to feed the ‘hidden hungers’ of the trees,” agreed Don.

Getting a soil test is an important step in determining a crop's exact nutritional needs. Foliar analysis is also extremely useful because nutrients present in the soil may not be reaching the leaves and nuts. Soil and tissue sampling do more than identify nutrient deficiencies, because they also call attention to situations

of possible over-fertilization. In addition to unnecessary expense, applying too much fertilizer can cause problems such as excessive vegetative growth in pecan trees, resulting in reduced bloom and nut set.

Consumption of tree nuts has significantly increased in recent years, partly because they offer a number of essential health and nutritional benefits. For example, one ounce of pecans provides three grams of protein. Pecans are in great demand as an export crop (see related story on page 7). However, restrictions in foreign markets can complicate production.

“Some of our pecans for markets in China and Europe are subject to certain guidelines, like no glyphosate herbicide,” explained Tyler. “Fortunately, we're finding alternative strategies for managing those

challenges differently. One option is to plant a cover crop between rows to suppress weeds.”

***Planting a pecan orchard requires patience and optimism, but the rewards can definitely pay off later. For more information about managing tree nuts or any other crop, contact your local Fertilzona or Compton Ag office, or visit [www.fertilzona.com](http://www.fertilzona.com)***

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**“Our pecan acres  
have tripled in the  
last three years.”**

– PCA Tyler Smith,  
Fertilzona – Willcox

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# FICO/Green Valley Pecan Company; Sahuarita, Arizona

## Three generations of innovation and quality

Thanks to our growers' abilities to adapt and excel, Arizona agriculture is raising the bar. A perfect example is Green Valley Pecan Company of Sahuarita, Arizona. Green Valley, a division of Farmers Investment CO. (FICO), actually owns three separate pecan-growing facilities in Arizona and Georgia, totaling over 9,000 acres and supporting a staff of about 100 farm workers.

Green Valley began in 1948 when its founder, Keith Walden, planted cotton in the Santa Cruz Valley, south of Tucson. Later realizing that the rich soil and other environmental conditions were ideal for growing pecans, the Waldens began converting more than 7,000 acres in 1965 to become the largest irrigated pecan orchard in the world.

Today, led by CEO Dick Walden (Keith's son) and the third generation of the family, Green Valley has earned a reputation as a top supplier of premium fresh pecans. Green Valley pecans are valued by confectioners, bakers, and retailers around the world for their superior taste and quality.

Consistently maintaining a supply of exceptional pecans requires ongoing, intensive management, especially considering that pecan trees are "alternate bearing" – in other words, they typically go from a high-yielding year to a less-productive year and then back again (see related story on page 1).

But Green Valley works around that to minimize the differences.

"We maximize our yield and nut quality with pruning and fertility management," explained Brian Driscoll, General Manager of Farming Operations. "Consistent yield and quality are very important for our shelling plant."

The pecan harvest season runs from November to January, but supporting the orchards are a year-round challenge.

"We need to be sure the trees have consistent nutrient levels and stabilized fertility all the time," said Brian, who is also a Certified Crop Advisor. "We can't hold back during an off-year, so we don't short the trees going into a big on-year." His strategy includes frequent soil tests and leaf analyses to stay aware of the trees' exact nutritional requirements.

"Brian really has his ducks in a row," said PCA Don Platt, Fertizona – Casa Grande. "He always pays attention to his testing and micronutrient levels, and you can see the results in the healthy trees."

"I have to make all the numbers work," Brian added, "and Fertizona is a big help for us. I can go to them and say, 'Here's our need,' and they'll customize a nutrient blend that fits."

Among its other leading-edge management practices, Green Valley operates a high-tech, 100% sprinkler irrigation system at its San Simon farm in Cochise County, and is expanding sprinkler acreage at the Sahuarita farm. By applying liquid fertilizers, Brian minimizes machine needs in the field.

Green Valley Pecan Company is a vertically integrated operation that shells its nuts in addition to growing them, ensuring unmatched levels of quality control. Pecans are processed in the company's own dedicated facilities to eliminate risks of cross-contamination.

FICO/Green Valley has also become deeply involved in the expanding market for organic nuts. The Sahuarita operation features over 2,000 acres of certified-organic pecan production, and Fertizona provides support there as well.

"We use a blend of their PBO (organic fertilizer) with added nitrogen and microbials," Brian said. "Fertizona is one of the few suppliers really working with organics. They're ahead of the curve."

**For more information about Green Valley Pecan Company, including purchase options and recipes, please visit [www.greenvalleypecan.com](http://www.greenvalleypecan.com)**

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**"Fertizona is a big help for us."**

– Brian Driscoll, FICO/Green Valley Pecan Company; Sahuarita, Arizona

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## Bringing a Lot to the Table

### Customers benefit from Tim Gavelek's wealth of experience

Over the years, our "Meet Your Rep" articles have introduced you to a long line of Fertizona employees, including many recent college graduates just getting started on their careers. But Tim Gavelek, this edition's featured representative, brings a vastly different background to his introduction.

"I've already got 35-plus years of experience in this business," said Tim, who spent that time as a well-respected golf course superintendent, most recently at Coldwater Golf Club in Avondale. "I've worked with Fertizona for a long time, and I always thought that if I ever changed jobs, they would be a company I'd want to work for."

That opportunity became available last winter, and Tim made the switch. He's now part of the Fertizona team, working out of our Fennemore location with Nick Lubich and Kevin Walsh in our Turf and Landscape group, led by Cory Scherting.

"It was really an easy transition," he said. "I was already familiar with Fertizona's products, and I know exactly what kinds of challenges golf superintendents face. I can recognize their problems and be proactive with recommendations."

For example, Tim intuitively understands the best practices for management of seasonal turfgrasses, overseeding, fertilizers, disease treatment, pest control, turf paint, and much more. With his vast experience and knowledge base, Tim brings instant credibility to his position. He also has a Qualified Applicator certification. In addition to golf courses, Tim calls on many nurseries and landscape contractors.

"Part of my job is to get people reacquainted with Fertizona if they haven't dealt with us lately," he added. "I want them to realize that the service we provide is much better than anybody else's."

Originally from northern Indiana and a graduate of Michigan State University, Tim started his superintendent career in Colorado. In the late '80s, his company transferred him to the Ventana Canyon Golf Club in Tucson. It was a life-changing move, because that's how he met his wife, Kristen, who was then a student at U of A. The couple got married in 1989, and they now have 24-year-old twins, a boy and a girl. In their spare time, the Gaveleks relax by hiking and taking short trips to San Diego.

"Fertizona is a perfect fit for me," Tim said. "They're a family-oriented company, and they're always reaching out to help me in any way they can."

After more than three decades in turf management, it might be safe to assume that Tim's everyday challenges and responsibilities haven't changed all that much, but he does point out one major difference.

"I definitely like my working hours better now," he said. "Golf course superintendents have to get up really early!"

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**"Fertizona is a perfect fit for me."**

**– Tim Gavelek,  
Fertizona - Fennemore**

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*Tim and Kristen Gavelek*



# Making a More Productive Summer

## Priaxor® fungicide mitigates heat stress in cotton and alfalfa

The phrase “value-added” is popular in business communications, and for good reason. When a product or service is said to have added value, it usually means you get more than what you pay for, or that the product goes beyond its expectations.

For cotton and alfalfa growers in Arizona, that description fits Priaxor® fungicide from BASF. Featuring advanced chemistry and the exclusive active ingredient Xemium® fungicide, Priaxor was developed to provide long-lasting, broad-spectrum disease control in a variety of crops. But it also does much more.

“Priaxor is an outstanding performer even in the absence of any fungal disease,” said BASF Business Representative Jeff Boydston. “It’s one of the only fungicides labeled for both disease control and plant health.”

Specifically, Priaxor has been shown to mitigate plant stress, increase nitrogen utilization, enhance photosynthesis, improve

water uptake efficacy, and more. For cotton and alfalfa growers in Arizona, those capabilities are a huge plus, especially the stress reduction.

Heat stress is a major cause of yield loss in Arizona cotton, but the plant health benefits of Priaxor fungicide directly correlate to yield increases in desert production. In independent side-by-side tests in Eloy, Arizona from 2018, fields treated with Priaxor at a 4-ounce rate in a sequential program (vs. a single early-season application) produced an increase of 17% for fruiting squares, flowers, and bolls, resulting in 0.5 to 0.75 bale increases over the grower standard.

Priaxor fungicide is equally impressive in alfalfa. Long summer days and hot Arizona nights generate additional stress on alfalfa, which can reduce yields and hay quality, but Priaxor helps to protect a crop from those deficits.

## Priaxor® Fungicide

Tests on summer alfalfa cuttings in Gila Bend, Arizona demonstrated the Priaxor advantage. Using two fields of 28.6 acres each, Priaxor fungicide was applied in late May and mid-July on 4” – 6” regrowth. The field treated with Priaxor produced 11.22 large bales vs. 10.28 bales on the untreated acres – almost a 10% difference.

“Priaxor really helps alfalfa to push through the summer slump,” Jeff added. “It reduces stress to support yield and quality, while also increasing nitrogen uptake and enhancing carbohydrate production.”

***For more information about the benefits of Priaxor fungicide, contact your local Fertilizer or Compton Ag office, or visit [www.fertilizer.com](http://www.fertilizer.com), or go to <https://agriculture.basf.us/crop-protection/products/priaxor.html>***

## “Priaxor really helps alfalfa to push through the summer slump.”

– Jeff Boydston, BASF  
Business Representative







## Preparing for the Unknowns

### Make plans now to adapt for market changes

Agribusiness professionals are well aware that our world is unpredictable, and here in 2020, unprecedented situations make things even more complicated. But life has to go on, so what new strategies can we use to keep up with the changes?

"It's kind of hard to look ahead now, because the markets are so volatile," said Gary McKenzie, president of FARM, Inc., an Arizona firm specializing in crop insurance and agricultural financial management. "The best thing I can say to growers is to be as flexible as you can. With every

challenge there are winners and losers, and you have to position yourself to be one of the winners."

Gary works with growers and livestock producers to help them adjust to current market conditions and opportunities. His company has a wide range of insurance and commodity programs designed to address individual needs and unique circumstances that his clients face. He also works with farm operations and lenders to arrange financing.

"Our products help to level out revenue streams and manage risks," Gary explained. "Sometimes growers have to

be creative with their crop choices, and we can advise them on their decisions."

One thing Gary recommends is for growers to refinance their long-term debt now, while terms are so favorable.

"There's never been a better time for refinancing," he said. "They can even structure a loan with no prepayment penalty."

***For additional details regarding specific programs, call Gary at 480-491-1444. To learn more about crop choices and other financing options, contact your local Fertizona or Compton Ag office, or visit [www.fertizona.com](http://www.fertizona.com)***



## New Hires

Francisco Olvera  
CYC Solutions

Brady Stephens  
CYC Solutions

Nathanael Lee  
Willcox

Trevor Miers  
Casa Grande

Britt Parker  
Buckeye

Colton Tew  
Yuma

# Planning For Better Days Ahead

## More growth anticipated in consumption and production of nuts

The coronavirus pandemic of 2020 will likely be noted in history as a period when every aspect of life changed, and although things should eventually get back to some kind of “normal,” this year’s unprecedented conditions make it hard to forecast consumer trends and patterns. A year ago, who could have predicted that gas would be too plentiful and toilet paper too scarce?

“Due to the Covid-19 situation, there is a lot of uncertainty among decision-makers right now,” commented Paul Reynolds, President of Triple Crown International, a global agricultural brokerage firm focused on nuts, dried fruit, and edible seeds, with offices in Texas and California. “Around the world and in each industry segment – procurement, repackers, manufacturers, and distributors – there are different factors to deal with, and they’re all changing.”

On the other hand, there is also an encouraging level of positive attitudes in the nut industry, especially based on growth in consumer demand which supports long-term optimism.

“Consumption has been on the rise,” Paul said. “For example, demand for pecans is expanding every year in export markets within Europe and markets like South Korea and Australia. We’re also seeing more consumer interest in plant-based alternative products, such as almond milk, pecan butter, and many others.”

Tree nuts are known for being an excellent protein source and for providing other attractive health benefits, including fiber and “good” fats. As more consumers seek food choices that promote healthier lifestyles, nuts are an ideal choice for snacks. Organic nut options are gaining in popularity as well.

“All four major nut commodities produced in the U.S. have experienced consistent increases in plantings, and supplies are increasing,” Paul added. “There are also new products coming once we get past this current situation.”



## Fertizona Teams with Stewardship Group

In our ongoing corporate efforts to emphasize safety and integrity, Fertizona is partnering with ResponsibleAg, an industry-led organization committed to helping agribusinesses properly handle and store farm input materials. Based in Kentucky, ResponsibleAg is a nation-wide, non-profit program that works with its member companies to be in compliance with all federal and local regulations addressing health, safety, environmental, and security concerns. Through its efforts, the group enhances the protection of members’ employees, customers, and communities.

“We’re taking these steps to actively participate with ResponsibleAg so we can better promote the safety and well-being of everyone involved in our business,” said Brian Daley, Fertizona’s Director of Marketing. “In a way, membership is like a Boy Scout badge that shows we’re complying with regulatory bodies.”

Participants in ResponsibleAg gain access to a range of beneficial support materials, assessment programs, training modules, best-management practices, audit checklists, emergency-response strategies, and other useful tools. Individual growers can also contact the group to take advantage of its resources for themselves. **To learn more, visit [www.responsibleag.org](http://www.responsibleag.org)**





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## LOCATIONS

Contact Your Local Office For All Your Growing Needs

### CASA GRANDE

Main Office  
2850 South Peart Road  
Casa Grande, AZ 85193  
(520) 836-7477  
  
Dennis Osborn  
Crop Protection  
  
Tyke Bennett  
Seed Products & Fertilizer Bagging  
  
Jimmy Compton  
Crop Nutrition  
  
Shea Nieto  
Credit Manager  
  
Jeffrey Bengé  
Financial Controller

### BUCKEYE

26705 West Baseline Road  
Buckeye, AZ 85326  
(623) 386-4491  
John Haggard, Manager

### FENNEMORE

17102 West Olive Avenue  
Waddell, AZ 85355  
(623) 935-4252  
John Haggard, Manager

### ROLL

4212 South Avenue 39E  
Roll, AZ 85347  
(928) 785-9016  
Jared Osborn, Manager

### THATCHER

4257 US Highway 70  
Thatcher, AZ 85552  
(928) 428-3161  
Shawn Wright, Manager

### WILLCOX

512 East Maley Street  
Willcox, AZ 85643  
(520) 384-2264  
Kent Cleckler, Manager

### YUMA

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Yuma, AZ 85365  
(928) 344-9806  
Brad Brchan, Manager

### COMPTON AG SERVICES

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(760) 922-3117  
John Haggard, Manager

### AG EXPRESS

15472 West Jimmie Kerr Boulevard  
Casa Grande, AZ 85122  
(520) 876-9982  
Dave Barrett, Manager

### CYC SOLUTIONS

3085 North Cessna Way  
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Tanner Nelson, Manager

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