



GARDEN NOTES

UTAH'S A GREAT PLACE FOR NUTS

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Utah has more than its share of nuts, but when it comes to the type that grow on trees, most of the more exotic nuts can't be grown in Northern Utah. Macadamia, pistachios and chestnuts are typically brought in from warm climates in tropical locations.

“Still, you can grow some pretty good nuts in Utah,” says Jerry Goodspeed, Utah State University Extension horticulturist. “One of my favorites is the filbert or hazelnut. This nut can be grown as a shrub or a medium-sized tree. It is easier to grow as a shrub because it takes less work and pruning.”

Growing a good crop of nuts requires two different varieties so they can cross pollinate, he says. Like most plants, they thrive in a well-drained, organic rich soil but are actually very adaptable to most growing conditions. They require very little, if any, extra fertilization and deep, infrequent water.

The largest nut tree we can grow is the walnut, Goodspeed says. Both black and English walnuts thrive and produce great fruit in our area. The trees themselves can reach heights over 70 feet. Walnut trees need a well-drained location, a good nitrogen fertilization every spring and regular watering to produce better nuts.

The nuts usually begin to drop in the late fall, he says. Harvesting can be accelerated by shaking the branches to knock the nuts off the tree. Remove the hulls as soon as possible. Many of the hulls will split as the nuts drop. Wash hulled nuts to remove the tannin, and let them dry in the sun or spread them out in a cool, dry location, turning them occasionally to promote uniform drying. Once the nut is dry it should easily crack. They can be stored in their shells for several months. Once they are shelled, either freeze them or store them in the refrigerator for several weeks.

“A few brave souls grow almonds in our area,” Goodspeed says. “The trees survive our climate just fine, but nut production can be sporadic at best, due in part to their early blooming date. The years we miss a late frost and have a long summer growing period, they produce great fruit.”

Like filberts, almonds require cross-pollination, so two different almond varieties must be planted for optimal production, he explains. They do best in a well-drained, acidic soil. They do not like heavy soils and can suffer from iron chlorosis in wet, alkaline soils. Shake the fruit off of the branches when the hulls start to crack open. Once harvested, remove the hulls completely and dry the nuts.

Although the southern end of our state has a reputation for growing pecans, they can be grown here in the north, too, he says. Like almonds, they only produce once every few years. They need a long, hot growing season. The trees can adapt to many different soils but prefer it to be deeply fertile. Harvest and treat the nuts like you would walnuts.

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