



SPECIALTY CROPS







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All About **SPECIALTY CROPS**

What Are Specialty Crops?

Specialty crops are a vibrant, diverse group of plants—fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops like flowers—that go beyond everyday produce. Cultivated for food, medicine, or beauty, they bring unique flavors, health benefits, and aesthetic appeal to farms and gardens. Think juicy plums, crunchy pecans, or colorful wildflowers. These crops, as defined by the Farm Bill, offer a chance to diversify your land, boost its health, and tap into new revenue streams. This booklet guides you through integrating these valuable plants into your space.

Why Specialty Crops Are Worth It

Specialty crops are a game-changer for your farm. They boost biodiversity, leading to healthier soil, a stronger ecosystem, and better wildlife habitat. Plus, they can provide extra income during off-seasons—USDA data shows specialty crop farmers can earn up

to 30% more per acre. Whether you're after ecological improvements or a financial boost, specialty crops deliver.

Is Now the Time to Try Specialty Crops?

The demand for unique, locally grown specialty crops is surging—offering farmers a chance to diversify and thrive. Considering a leap into this growing market? Here's how to decide if the timing's right:

- **Market Potential:** Is there a strong, local demand for the crop you're eyeing?
- **Land Suitability:** Does your soil, sunlight, and climate align with its needs?
- **Your Drive:** Are you motivated by profit, passion, or a mix of both?
- **Conservation Goals:** Could this enhance your land's ecological value?

Reflecting on these questions sharpens your focus and lays the groundwork for success. Specialty crops aren't just a trend—they're an opportunity tailored to your goals.



How Do I Pick the Perfect Specialty Crop?

Selecting the right specialty crop blends your interests with practical realities. It's a decision that can boost income, sustainability, and satisfaction. Here's what to consider:

- **Your Passion:** Do berries, nuts, flowers, or another niche excite you?
- **Your resources:** Can your time, equipment, and labor support it?
- **Return Timeline:** Fruits and nuts may yield in a few years; timber could take decades. What fits your plan?
- **Local Market:** What's in demand near you—fresh produce, herbs, or specialty goods?
- **Land and Climate:** Does your USDA planting zone favor sun-drenched fruits or shade-loving crops? Could agroforestry or livestock integration amplify your output?

The perfect crop matches your setup and vision, turning potential into profit.

For expert guidance on specialty crops, contact your local county extension service, the Farm Service Agency, or the USDA Rural Information Center. These organizations provide access to knowledgeable specialists, practical resources, and detailed information on grants and subsidies to support your decision-making. Visit their websites or reach out directly for more information.

- **Center for Agroforestry (University of Missouri):**
www.centerforagroforestry.org
- **Farm Service Agency:**
www.fsa.usda.gov
- **National Resources Conservation Services:**
www.nrcs.usda.gov
- **USDA Rural Information Centers:**
www.nal.usda.gov/ric

discover the
APM DIFFERENCE



All About **SPECIALTY CROPS**

Why Choose Forrest Keeling's RPM-Produced Container-Grown Trees?

The trees you plant today shape your farm's future. Bare-root trees might tempt you with their low cost and simplicity, but they're finicky—demanding precise planting windows and extra care to survive.

Enter Forrest Keeling's Root Production Method® (RPM), a patented 12-step nursery process that crafts trees with dense, fibrous root systems built for faster results and unsurpassed toughness. These RPM-produced container-grown trees are revolutionizing conservation and agroforestry:

- **Explosive Growth:** They rocket to maturity, growing twice as fast and fruiting sooner. Studies show up to 50% faster trunk growth in the first decade.
- **Faster Payback:** You're not just buying a tree—you're buying time. Quicker harvests mean your investment pays off sooner.
- **Plant Anytime:** These trees can be planted in nearly any season, giving you freedom.
- **Unmatched Quality:** From hand-picked seeds to special nutrition and moisture protection, every detail ensures top-tier resilience.

Sure, they cost more upfront, but their early yields and durability save you money and headaches down the road. It's a smart bet on a thriving future.



Seedlings or Grafted Trees: Which Fits Your Vision?

Choosing between seedlings and grafted trees is like picking between a wild card and a sure thing:

- **Seedlings:** Grown from seeds, each one's a unique surprise—like siblings with their own quirks. They're perfect for those seeking diversity or new traits.
- **Grafted trees:** These are clones of a proven parent tree, made by joining a bud (scion) to a rootstock. Grafting delivers reliability and consistency every time—think identical 'Granny Smith' apples, harvest after harvest.

Grafted trees offer dependable production and quality, while seedlings offer diversity. Your crop and goals will help you decide.

Pollination and Fruit: Plan for the Win

Pollination can make or break your harvest. Picture this: A farmer plants an orchard, dreaming of juicy fruit—only to find out too late the trees need a partner. Don't let that be you. Here's the rundown:

- **Self-Fertile (Monoecious):** These independent spirits produce fruit solo, no help needed.
- **Cross-Pollinators:** These team players need a companion—a different variety of the same species—to shine.
- **Dioecious:** These demand both male and female plants for the magic to happen.

A quick chat with a tree specialist ensures your orchard's set for success. Plan smart, and watch your harvest explode.

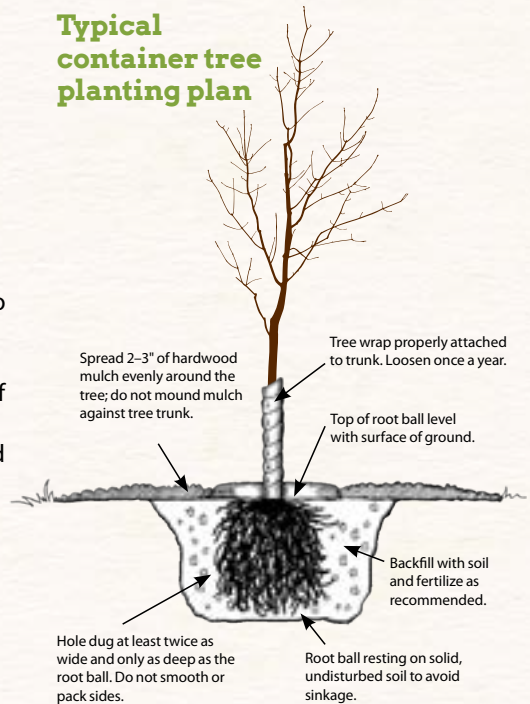
Can You Make Money with Specialty Crops?

Absolutely—specialty crops are turning dreams into dollars for savvy farmers. From passion to profit, here's your roadmap:

- **Know Your Market:** Is there demand within 50 miles? Dig into local trends and buyers.
- **Build Your Network:** Link up with buyers, suppliers, and growers to open doors.
- **Plan the Details:** Will you hit farmers' markets, sell direct, or go wholesale? Budget for transport, labor, and prep.
- **Crunch the Numbers:** A solid plan turns vision into cash flow.

With the right crop and strategy, specialty crops can be a goldmine.

Typical container tree planting plan



Shrubs & Trees Calculator

Spacing	Plants Per Acre	Spacing	Plants Per Acre
6' x 6'	1,210	12' x 12'	302
6' x 8'	907	16' x 16'	170
6' x 10'	726	20' x 16'	136
6' x 12'	605	20' x 18'	121
7' x 11'	568	20' x 20'	109
7' x 12'	519	22' x 22'	90
8' x 8'	680	24' x 24'	75
8' x 10'	544	25' x 25'	69
8' x 12'	454	30' x 30'	48
10' x 10'	436	40' x 40'	27
10' x 12'	363	50' x 50'	18

How to Calculate:

Multiply the distance in feet between shrubs or trees by the distance the plants are apart in the rows. Divide by 43,560 (the square footage of an acre) by that number. You can also refer to the plant calculator on our website, forrestkeeling.com/calculator.



Fast Facts:

- > **Native Range:** Eastern North America, thriving in Zones 4-8.
- > **Growth Habit:** Slow and steady, attaining a height of 70-90 feet and a width of 60-80 feet, with a lifespan of 300-400 years.
- > **Syrup Season:** From late winter to early spring, when warm days trigger the sap flow.

ACER

Sugar Maple

Sweet Profits from a Timeless Tree

The sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*) is more than just a pretty face—it's a powerhouse specialty crop that provides beauty, utility, and a reliable revenue source. Famous for its world-class maple syrup and stunning fall colors—vibrant yellows, oranges, and reds—this deciduous giant is an excellent choice for landowners looking to diversify their agroforestry projects. With its majestic oval-to-rounded canopy, it serves as much of an asset to your landscape as it does to your finances.

Why Choose Sugar Maple

- ✓ **Maple Syrup Goldmine:** Gather a renewable harvest every late winter to early spring. A single mature tree produces 9-13 gallons of sap per season, which boils down to about a quart of syrup—ideal for local markets, artisanal branding, or value-added products like maple candy or baked goods.
- ✓ **Market Appeal:** Maple syrup's timeless allure commands premium prices. Grades range from delicate Grade A (light amber) for drizzling to robust Grade B for cooking. Demand for local, small-batch syrup is on the rise, offering a lucrative niche.
- ✓ **Lumber Potential:** In addition to syrup, sugar maple wood is highly valued for furniture, flooring, and cabinetry, contributing long-term value as the trees mature or are selectively harvested.
- ✓ **Ecological Bonus:** These trees boost biodiversity, offer shade for livestock or understory crops, and impress with their fall foliage, which can attract agritourism visitors.



ACER Sugar Maple

Cultivation Essentials

Sugar maples are low-maintenance once established, making them a practical choice for busy landowners. Here's how to grow them successfully:

Soil and Site Selection:

- > Prefers deep, moist, well-drained soils with a pH range of 5.5 to 7.3. Medium to fine textures enhance sap production.
- > Avoid salty or compacted soils—road runoff or heavy machinery can put stress on roots.
- > Plant space trees 35 feet apart in rows for the best syrup yields, or closer (20-25 feet) if prioritizing lumber or aesthetics.

Planting and Care:

- > Thrives in full sun to partial shade, adapting to various light conditions.
- > Consistently water young trees for the first few years; mature trees tolerate drought stress effectively.
- > Minimal pruning is necessary—only remove deadwood or shape for access to taps.

Pollination:

- > Monoecious, featuring both male and female flowers on the same tree, facilitates self-pollination without the need for additional pollinators.

Timeline:

- > **Bloom:** April (small, yellowish flowers)
- > **Harvest:** Late February to early April (sap flow peaks during alternating freezes and thaws)
- > **First Syrup:** Trees require a trunk diameter of 7 inches DBH (approximately 20 to 30 years from seedlings, 10 to 15 from grafts), which can support 1 to 3 taps.





Potential Challenges (and Solutions)

Sugar maples are resilient, though not immune to problems. Stay proactive with these tips:



Soil Compaction: Heavy equipment can hinder growth or reduce sap flow. Apply mulch or restrict traffic around roots.



Pests: such as gypsy moths, fall webworms, and sugar maple borers can eat leaves. Monitor and use organic controls if necessary.



Diseases: Verticillium wilt and leaf scorch can occur in unfavorable conditions. Ensure proper drainage and refrain from overwatering.



Salt Sensitivity: Avoid placing trees near salted roads or runoff areas.

How to Plant a Tree

Video providing a step-by-step guide on the proper techniques for planting a tree to ensure its health and longevity.





Sugar Maple (*Acer saccharum*)

The classic native tree, providing dependable syrup (2% sugar content), high-quality lumber, and a stunning fall display of gold, orange, and red.

Super Sweet

A Cornell-bred gem from the Uihlein Sugar Maple Field Station, boasting sap sugar content of 6-7% (with some reaching 10%), significantly surpassing the standard 2%. Fewer gallons to boil translates to higher efficiency and profit.





Making money with Sugar Maple

Sugar maples offer versatile income streams:

- ✓ **Syrup Sales:** Begin with a few taps—one tap for a 7-inch tree and up to three for a 12-inch tree—and expand as your grove develops. Sell directly to consumers or wholesale to local shops.
- ✓ **Value-Added Products:** Transform syrup into maple butter, candies, or infused flavors to command premium pricing.
- ✓ **Timber:** Harvest mature trees after decades for high-value hardwood, balancing syrup production with selective harvesting.
- ✓ **Agroforestry Pairings:** Grow shade-tolerant crops such as ginseng or mushrooms underneath the canopy for additional revenue.

Sugar maples are a long-term win for landowners. Their slow growth rewards patience with decades of syrup, timber, and ecological advantages. Begin with a small stand—10 trees can produce 2-3 gallons of syrup each year—or choose Super Sweet for quicker returns. Integrate them into your farm's ecosystem, and see how this specialty crop increases your profits for generations.





Fast Facts:

- > **Native Range:** Eastern North America, thriving in Zones 2-9.
- > **Growth Habit:** Small tree or large shrub, 10-25 feet tall and 10-15 feet wide, with a tidy, rounded shape.
- > **Lifespan:** Produces reliably for 35-50 years, with some trees lasting even longer.

AMELANCHIER

Serviceberry



A Profitable Native with Year-Round Appeal

Serviceberry, also known as Juneberry or Amelanchier, is a native tree that combines profitability with beauty, making it an ideal agroforestry cash crop for landowners. Its sweet, blueberry-like fruits ripen in June, providing opportunities for fresh sales, jams, pies, and more. Meanwhile, its stunning spring blooms, smooth gray bark, and vibrant fall foliage enhance the aesthetic value of any farm. Whether you're diversifying your income streams or improving your property, serviceberry is an excellent choice. Its compact size and adaptability make it suitable for various layouts—such as hedgerows, field edges, or streamside plantings—adding versatility to your operation.

Why Choose Serviceberry?

- ✓ **Market-Ready Fruit:** The blue-black berries resemble blueberries in size, color, and flavor, offering a mild sweetness that is ideal for fresh markets, preserves, or baked goods. Demand is increasing, particularly among local and artisanal buyers.
- ✓ **Low Maintenance, High Return:** Once established, serviceberry needs minimal care, tolerating various soils and resisting most pests while requiring little pruning.
- ✓ **Erosion and Wildlife Benefits:** It stabilizes stream banks and attracts pollinators, which enhances farm biodiversity. *Note: Birds enjoy the berries, so netting is essential to protect your harvest.*
- ✓ **Ornamental Bonus:** With lacy white blooms in March-April, handsome, smooth grey bark, and vibrant red-gold fall color, this plant is a valuable landscaping asset, potentially creating opportunities for nursery or shrub sales.



AMELANCHIER Serviceberry

Cultivation Essentials

Serviceberry is easy to grow and appeals to landowners looking for a simple, profitable crop. Here's how to make it successful:

Soil and Site Selection:

- > Thrives in moist, well-drained soils with a pH of 6.0 to 7.8 but also adapts well to clay or rocky sites such as wooded slopes.
- > Space 9 feet apart in hedgerows for fruit production, or place them closer for decorative borders.

Light and Water:

- > Full sun boosts fruit size and flavor; partial shade is acceptable but decreases yield.
- > Water regularly until established; mature plants handle drought well.

Pruning and Care:

- > Prune in late winter or early spring to remove deadwood and crossed branches. Keep some older growth—flowers (and fruit) form on mature wood.
- > Mulch to control weeds and retain moisture, especially early on.

Pollination:

- > Self-fertile; however, planting two different species or cultivars nearby boosts berry production.

Timeline:

- > **Bloom:** March to April (fragrant white flowers)
- > **Harvest:** June (berries ripen to blue-black)
- > **First Fruit:** 2-5 years after planting





Potential Challenges (and Solutions)

Serviceberry is resilient and faces no major threats, although minor issues can arise. Here's how to manage them:



Pests: Being a member of the rose family, it may attract Japanese beetles, spider mites, or aphids. Control them using insecticidal soap, neem oil, or natural predators like ladybugs.



Birds: Installing netting during the fruiting season is essential for protecting your crops from wildlife.



Diseases: Fire blight, caused by the bacterium *Erwinia amylovora*, is a bacterial disease that can affect various plants in the rose family, including Amelanchier (serviceberry). Leaf spot or rust may occur in humid conditions. Ensure good air flow with proper spacing and pruning.

Benefits of RPM

See the advantages of the Root Production Method (RPM), a patented process that speeds plant growth, resilience, and survivability.





Allegheny (*A. laevis*)

Smooth leaves, purplish new growth, and sweet, juicy berries perfect for fresh sales or value-added products.

Downy (*A. arborea*)

Its hairy young leaves and red-purple, apple-like fruits are favorites among customers and birds alike. It easily hybridizes for unique flavors.

Robin Hill (*A. x grandiflora* 'Robin Hill')

Pink-to-white flowers, dark purple berries, and an upright form ideal for landscaping or ornamental sales.

Roundleaf (*A. sanguinea*)

Low, arching shrub with miniature apple-like fruits suited to small-scale production.

Saskatoon (*A. alnifolia*)

Drought-resistant and featuring exceptional, delicious berries, perfect for jams, pies, and wholesale markets.

Shadblow (*A. canadensis*)

Round, blueberry-sized fruits that are mildly sweet. Plant two for improved pollination and greater yields.





Making money with Serviceberry

Serviceberry offers diverse revenue options to boost your farm's bottom line:

- ✓ **Fresh Fruit Sales:** Sell at farmers' markets or local stores, emphasizing their native, blueberry-like appeal.
- ✓ **Value-Added Products:** Make jams, syrups, or pies for premium pricing—serviceberry's nostalgic flavor connects with customers.
- ✓ **Agroforestry Integration:** Utilize areas along field edges or streams for erosion control while harvesting fruit, or combine with other crops in permaculture systems.

Serviceberry is a low-risk, high-reward crop that thrives with minimal care, adapts to diverse conditions, and doubles as a productive and ornamental plant. Its delicious berries attract buyers, while its beauty draws pollinators and wildlife. Whether you start small with a hedgerow or scale up to an orchard, serviceberry delivers sweet profits and satisfied customers.





Fast Facts:

- > **Native Range:** Eastern North America, thriving in Zones 3-7.
- > **Growth Habit:** Small to medium shrub, reaching 8 feet in height and 9 feet in width, forming colonies through rhizomes.
- > **Lifespan:** Produces consistently for 10 to 15 years, with plants thriving for over 30 years.

ARONIA

Chokeberry



A Tart Treasure with Big Profits

Chokeberry (*Aronia melanocarpa*), also known as aronia, is a native shrub that packs a punch—both in flavor and market potential. This hidden gem produces tart, antioxidant-rich berries, vibrant wine-red fall foliage, and clusters of delicate white blooms in early summer, making it a standout on your farm throughout the year.

For landowners seeking a low-effort crop with substantial rewards, chokeberry is a savvy agroforestry investment. From syrups and supplements to jams and wines, chokeberry's resilience, versatility, and skyrocketing demand in the health food market make it a crop that's as tough as it is profitable.

Why Choose Chokeberry?

- ✓ **Superfood Status:** Black chokeberries rank at the top with antioxidant levels (anthocyanins and flavonoids) that are five times higher than those of cranberries or blueberries, leading to increased demand for "aronia juice," supplements, and blended drinks.
- ✓ **Market Versatility:** Sell fresh or frozen berries to local markets, or process them into jams, syrups, or wine for premium prices. Health food trends boost their appeal.
- ✓ **Tough as Nails:** Thrives in both wet and dry conditions, resists pests and diseases, and naturally spreads into low-maintenance colonies—so it's ideal for windbreaks or erosion control.
- ✓ **Dual Purpose:** In addition to its fruit, its vibrant foliage and compact shape (up to 8 feet tall) enhance its ornamental value, creating opportunities for nursery sales.



ARONIA Chokeberry

Cultivation Essentials

Chokeberry is a grower's dream—adaptable and fuss-free. Here's how to succeed:

Soil and Site Selection:

- > Prefers moist, well-drained soils but adapts to clay, sandy, or rocky locations. It's hardy in USDA zones 3-8, making it a fit for diverse climates.
- > Space plants 5-6 feet apart to optimize fruit production and simplify harvesting.

Light and Water:

- > Full sun enhances berry yield and flavor, although partial shade will work (with slightly lower output).
- > Water young plants regularly to establish roots. Once mature, they're drought-tolerant and handle dry spells with ease.

Care and Spread:

- > Spreads naturally via root suckers—a perk for expansion, but a challenge if you want containment.
- > Manage the spread by mowing around plants or installing barriers.

- > Prune lightly in late winter to shape the shrub or remove suckers; minimal upkeep is necessary.

Pollination:

- > Self-fertile, meaning that a single plant can bear fruit. However, its white flower clusters attract bees and butterflies, which may enhance yields.

Timeline:

- > **Bloom:** May to June (white flower clusters)
- > **Harvest:** Berries ripen in late summer. Hand-pick for small setups or use a mechanical harvester for larger ones.
- > **Yields & Returns:** Expect small yields until year three, with full production by year five. At \$3-5 per pound wholesale (more retail), even a modest planting can pay off.





Potential Challenges (and Solutions)

Chokeberry is nearly bulletproof with no major threats. Still, keep these in mind:



Birds: Birds love chokeberries as much as you do.

Solution: Use netting during ripening season or plant extra bushes to share the bounty.



Tartness: Raw berries make the mouth pucker.

Solution: Blend with sweeter fruits like apples or grapes for juice or position them as a health food niche.



Root Suckering: Root suckers can spread beyond your intended area.

Solution: Mow around plants regularly or use physical barriers like landscape fabric to keep growth in check.



Reduced Yield in Shade: Too much shade can lower berry production.

Solution: Plant in full sun where possible. If shade is unavoidable, accept slightly smaller harvests or thin branches to improve light penetration.



Wet Feet: While tolerant, prolonged waterlogging can stress roots.

Solution: Ensure decent drainage or plant on slightly elevated ground.

Benefits of RPM

See the advantages of the Root Production Method (RPM), a patented process that speeds plant growth, resilience, and survivability.





All cultivar species listed are A. melanocarp.

Black Chokeberry

Black chokeberries are small to medium-sized shrubs, typically reaching a height of 3-6 feet, and can also grow up to 6 feet wide. Plants feature glossy leaves and juicy berries.

McKenzie

Proven since 1976, this beauty features abundant fruit clusters, showy flowers, and vibrant red foliage in the fall. A dependable all-rounder.

Nero

Delicious berries, vibrant red leaves, and drought/salt resistant. Cold-hardy and self-pollinating—perfect for low-input farms.

Viking

Generates abundant yields and demonstrates resilience in both wet and dry locations. It is self-fertile and ideal for planting near ponds or streams.

Why Chokeberry Stands Out

Chokeberry isn't just another crop—it's a standout choice for savvy farmers:

- ✓ **Built for Tough and Varied Conditions:** No matter the soil or climate, chokeberry thrives where others falter.
- ✓ **Low Maintenance, High Yield:** Once established, it needs little care and delivers big
- ✓ **Aesthetic Appeal:** With white spring blooms, green summer foliage, and vibrant fall colors, chokeberry doubles as an ornamental. It supports pollinators, enhances biodiversity, and can even boost agritourism or farmstand appeal.



Making money with Chokeberry

Chokeberry's versatility fuels profit potential:

- ✓ **Fresh or Frozen Sales:** Market berries to health-conscious consumers or local grocers, highlighting their superfood status.
- ✓ **Value-Added Products:** Process into juice blends, jams, or dried snacks—add a farm-branded label for additional appeal.
- ✓ **Erosion Control Projects:** Offer to landowners or agencies for slope or streambank stabilization projects, combining fruit income with ecological services.
- ✓ **Agroforestry Fit:** Plant along field borders or waterways, integrating with other crops for varied income streams.

Resilient chokeberry's low maintenance requirements, nutritional benefits, and adaptability make it a highlight in agroforestry systems. Start with a small plot—10 plants can produce 50-100 pounds of berries each year—and expand as demand increases. This tart gem could be your farm's next major success.





Fast Facts:

- > **Native Range:** Eastern, southern, and Midwestern U.S., spanning from Ontario to Texas, thriving in Zones 5-9.
- > **Size:** 15 to 30 feet tall, 15 to 20 feet wide—compact and upright.
- > **Lifespan:** Produces consistently for 20-30 years.

ASIMINA

Pawpaw



A Native Cash Crop with Tropical Appeal

Pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*), the “custard apple of the Midwest,” is a native North American fruit that brings tropical flair to your farm.

Its large, yellowish-green berries offer a creamy, custard-like flavor—think banana meets mango—loaded with vitamins A and C, potassium, and magnesium. Ripening in late summer, pawpaws shine in fresh markets, smoothies, or artisanal treats like jams and desserts. Plus, this tree doubles as a stunning ornamental, with purple spring blooms, lush summer foliage, and golden fall leaves—perfect for agroforestry setups.

For growers, pawpaw is a low-maintenance winner with rising niche-market demand. Chefs and foodies love its exotic taste and native roots, driving premium prices. Wildlife loves it too, so netting is key to safeguard your harvest. Start with a few trees, and let this tropical-tasting native enhance your farm’s income.

Why Choose Pawpaw?

- ✓ **Market Edge:** Its unique flavor and scarcity attract attention at farmers’ markets and restaurants. Sell it fresh or process it into high-value products like pawpaw ice cream or frozen pulp.
- ✓ **Low Effort, Big Payoff:** Once established, pawpaws need little care and thrive in varied soils with few pests or diseases.
- ✓ **Ornamental Bonus:** Spring flowers, summer foliage, and autumn colors enhance visual appeal.
- ✓ **Agroforestry Fit:** At 15-30 feet tall, it’s perfect for planting along field edges, hedgerows, or understory alongside other crops.



ASIMINA Pawpaw

Cultivation Essentials

Pawpaws are easy to grow, making them a smart choice for landowners looking to profit without hassle. Here's how to cultivate them successfully:

Soil and Site Selection:

- > Thrives in well-drained, slightly acidic soil (pH 5.5-7.0), but it can adapt to various conditions. Loamy, fertile areas resemble its woodland-edge origins.
- > Space trees 10 to 15 feet apart for better airflow and easier picking.

Light and Water:

- > Full sun increases fruit production, while partial shade is effective but produces lower yields.
- > Water young trees frequently; established trees can endure dry periods.

Pruning and Care:

- > Lightly trim in late winter to remove dead or crowded branches. Fruit develops on old wood, so avoid over-pruning.
- > Skip heavy fertilizers; compost or a light organic mix will suffice.

Pollination:

- > Cross-pollination is necessary; plant at least two varieties for fruit.

Timeline:

- > **Bloom:** April to May (purple flowers).
- > **Harvest:** August to October (ripe when yellowish-green).
- > **First Fruit:** 3-5 years after planting grafted cultivars.





Potential Challenges (and Solutions)

Pawpaws are tough, but a few hurdles need attention:



Pests: Watch for webworms, specifically the Asimina webworm moth and pawpaw peduncle borers (which attack flowers) or Phyllosticta leaf spots. Remove affected areas; neem oil is a natural fix.



Wildlife: Birds and raccoons can be deterred with netting, reflective tape, or motion lights.



Short Shelf Life: Ripe fruit only lasts 2-3 days. Address this by:

- > Picking slightly underripe and refrigerating (lasts 1-2 weeks).
- > Freezing pulp or making jams and purees for year-round sales

Grafting for Consistent Crops

Video exploring the grafting process and how it can be used to ensure consistent and high-quality crop yields.





All cultivar species listed are *A. triloba*. *Peterson Pawpaw® cultivar

Allegheny®

Sweet, citrusy fruit with yellow-fleshed fruit (under 8 oz). High output, 8% seeds.

Chappell

Large (250g), creamy banana-pineapple flavor with 5% seeds. Vigorous and productive.

Mango

Early ripening, large, yellow-fleshed, with a mango-like flavor.

NC-1

Large (6 oz), with few seeds and yellow skin. Early harvest in September.

Overleese

Slow to start but produces large (6 oz+) and flavorful fruit.

Pennsylvania Golden

Medium (3-4 oz), with golden flesh and a reputation as a reliable bearer.

Potomac®

Large (12 oz+), sweet, firm, yellow fruit with 4% seeds and an upright growth habit.

Prolific

High yields of large, yellow fruit, harvested in October.

Rappahannock®

Medium to large, sweet, firm, with 3% seeds.

Shenandoah®

Large, custardy, firm for shipping; contains 6% seeds.

Sunflower

Partially self-fertile, medium to large (5-6 oz), with buttery flesh.

Susquehanna®

Largest Peterson Pawpaw® (up to 1 lb), rich flavor, with 3% seeds.

Tallahatchie®

Floral flavor, medium to large, clusters abundant.

Wabash®

Sweet, creamy, 8-12 oz fruit with 6% seeds.



Making money with Pawpaw

Pawpaw's scarcity and flavor make it a money-maker. Here's how to profit:

- ✓ **Fresh Sales:** Showcase its natural appeal in markets or to chefs for top prices.
- ✓ **Value-Added Products:** Transform fruit into jams, purees, or frozen pulp—products that offer a longer shelf life and a sense of nostalgia.
- ✓ **Agroforestry Integration:** Incorporate into permaculture or woodland margins with compatible crops.

Pawpaw combines low risk with high reward. Its adaptability, low maintenance, and dual fruit-and-ornamental value make it a smart choice for landowners. Plant a variety of types, add some netting, and reap the benefits from this native gem.



A close-up photograph of a tree trunk and its branches, heavily laden with leaves in various shades of yellow and orange, indicating autumn. The leaves are dense and cover most of the frame, with some green leaves still visible in the background. The tree trunk is dark and textured, running vertically through the center of the image.

Fast Facts:

- > **Native Range:** Midwest and eastern U.S., thriving in Zones 5-9.
- > **Growth:** Slow but steady, reaching heights of 60 to 80 feet and widths of 40 to 60 feet.
- > **Lifespan:** Produces nuts for 200-300 years with proper care.

CARYA

Hickory



A Slow-Growing Goldmine for Patient Growers

Hickory trees (*Carya* spp.) are a Midwestern treasure, offering landowners a cash crop that has significant payoff potential. Imagine this: rich, buttery nuts fetching top dollar at gourmet markets, high-quality wood for furniture or smoking meats, and breathtaking golden fall foliage that enhances your farm's appeal.

With 12 North American species, hickories range from the fast-growing shagbark (*C. ovata*) to the “Kingnut” shellbark (*C. laciniosa*), each showcasing unique strengths. While they may be slow to start—expect 8-10 years before the first nuts—they boast a longevity of up to 300 years, making them a legacy investment worth planting today.

Why Choose Hickory

- ✓ **Nut Profits:** Shellbark and shagbark nuts are culinary stars, ideal for fresh sales, baking, or artisanal snacks. Their alternate-year crops create scarcity, driving up value.
- ✓ **Wood Wealth:** Hickory's dense, durable timber is prized for furniture, flooring, and barbecue smoking, and it becomes a bonus income source as the trees mature.
- ✓ **Landscape Bonus:** Lush summer shade and vibrant fall colors enhance your farm's appeal, creating opportunities for agritourism, hunting leases, or nursery sales.
- ✓ **Low Maintenance:** Once established, hickories are exceptionally resilient, easily fending off most pests and diseases.



CARYA Hickory

Cultivation Essentials

Hickories reward patience with minimal fuss. Here's how to help them flourish:

Soil and Site Selection:

- > Loves rich, well-drained loamy soils; river bottoms and stream banks are ideal.
- > Space trees 25 to 35 feet apart to allow for their mature size and facilitate harvesting.

Light and Water:

- > Full sun enhances nut yields, while partial shade is effective but yields less.
- > Water young trees to develop deep roots; mature trees tolerate drought like champs.

Pruning and Care:

- > Prune lightly in late winter to shape or remove deadwood—nuts grow on older branches.
- > Avoid heavy fertilizers; a yearly layer of compost keeps them thriving.

Pollination:

- > Wind-pollinated; plant two varieties (e.g., shagbark and shellbark) for reliable nut set.

Timeline:

- > **Bloom:** April to May (small, greenish flowers).
- > **Harvest:** September to October; nuts drop when they are ripe.
- > **First Fruit:** 8-10 years after planting, then alternate years.





Potential Challenges (and Solutions)

Hickories are hardy, but here's what to watch for:



Slow Start: Waiting years for the first harvest can feel long. Pair with fast-growing crops like berries to help get you through.



Pests: Hickory bark beetles, pecan weevils, and twig girdlers may appear. Trim the affected areas; natural predators typically manage the rest.



Nut Drop: Alternate bearing results in inconsistent annual yields. Schedule your harvests and marketing to align with this cycle.

How to Plant a Tree

Video providing a step-by-step guide on the proper techniques for planting a tree to ensure its health and longevity.





Shagbark (*C. ovata*)

The fastest-growing true hickory, known for its sweet, variably sized nuts and signature peeling bark. A versatile champion.

Shellbark (*C. laciniosa*)

The “Kingnut” delivers the largest (4.5-6.5 cm), sweetest nuts. They are thick-shelled and ideal for premium markets.

Hican (*C. illinoensis* x *C. laciniosa*)

A hybrid of pecan and hickory that produces delicious, easy-to-shell nuts.

Mockernut (*C. tomentosa*)

Sweet, thick-shelled nuts (3.8-5 cm) in hefty husks—excellent for niche buyers.

Avoid Bitternut (*C. cordiformis*) and Pignut (*C. glabra*)—With bitter nuts, these species are better for wildlife or wood than edible crops.





Making money with Hickory

Hickories offer multiple ways to profit:

- ✓ **Nut Sales:** Sell shellbark or shagbark nuts fresh, roasted, or in baked goods—emphasize their rich, smoky flavor.
- ✓ **Timber:** Harvest mature trees or downed limbs for valuable wood while balancing nut production with selective cuts
- ✓ **Value-Added:** Smoke meats using hickory wood chips or package hickory wood chips or nut mixes for additional income.
- ✓ **Agroforestry Integration:** Plant along borders or streams to provide shade and control erosion, while integrating understory crops such as mushrooms.

Hickories are a long-term win. Their durability, low maintenance, and value for both nuts and wood make them a smart choice for agroforestry. Start small—a grove of 10 trees could produce 50-100 pounds of nuts per harvest—and watch your investment grow into a farm legacy.





Fast Facts:

- > **Native Range:**
Zones 5-9, Tolerates temp range of -20°F to 20°F.
- > **Growth:**
Moderate growth of 1-2 feet per year.
Mature size:
65 to 130 feet tall,
40 to 75 feet wide
- > **Lifespan:** Produces nuts for 200-300 years with proper care.

CARYA

Pecan



A Long-Term Profit Powerhouse

Pecans (*Carya illinoensis*) are North America's largest native nut crop, with the U.S. producing up to 400 million pounds annually—supplying 75% of the world's pecans. Native to the Mississippi Valley, these towering trees yield sweet, buttery nuts rich in antioxidants, making them a favorite among health-conscious consumers.

Beyond their nutritional appeal, pecans offer ecological benefits, providing wildlife habitat and aiding in erosion control. They also produce high-quality lumber, enhancing their value for landowners.

Whether you seek profit, sustainability, or both, pecans are a low-maintenance, versatile crop that boosts your farm's productivity and environmental health.

Why Choose Pecan

- ✓ **High Demand, Higher Returns:** Pecans fetch premium prices due to increasing global interest in healthy snacks and gourmet recipes.
- ✓ **Set It and Forget It:** Once established, pecan trees yield for decades—some orchards remain profitable for over 75 years with minimal maintenance.
- ✓ **Multiple Income Streams:** Sell nuts, harvest timber, or lease land for hunting—pecans maximize your farm's potential.



Cultivation Essentials

Hickories reward patience with minimal fuss. Here's how to help them flourish:

Soil and Site Selection:

- > Choose deep, well-drained soils that have a minimum of 3 feet of topsoil and a pH range of 6.0 to 7.5. Level land facilitates mechanical harvesting.
- > Space trees 35 feet apart initially (35 trees per acre), thinning to 60 feet apart (12-14 trees per acre) over 40 years as they mature.

Light and Water:

- > Full sun is essential.
- > Water young trees thoroughly; mature trees tolerate drought well.

Pruning and Care:

- > Prune to maintain the shape and remove any dead branches.
- > Requires a warm season of 160 days and 30 to 79 inches of annual rainfall. Humid climates are ideal.

Pollination:

- > Plant at least one protandrous (early pollen) and one protogynous (late pollen) variety for effective cross-pollination.

Timeline:

- > **Bloom:** April to May
- > **Harvest:** September to October
- > **First Nuts:** 4 to 12 years, depending on the variety





Potential Challenges (and Solutions)

Pecans are resilient, but watch for these manageable issues:



Pests: Pecan weevils, aphids, and spider mites can be managed using organic sprays or beneficial insects.



Diseases: Cotton root rot and crown gall are rare but possible; good drainage can help prevent them. Pecan scab, caused by the fungus *Cladosporium caryigenum* (formerly *Fusicladium effusum*), is the most destructive and economically damaging disease of pecan trees. Plant scab-resistant pecan cultivars.



Soil Tolerance: Pecans manage wetter soils more effectively than most nuts, but they should avoid standing water.

Grafting for Consistent Crops

Video exploring the grafting process and how it can be used to ensure consistent and high-quality crop yields.





All cultivar are grafted hybrids of C. illinoensis

Earlton (KT 337)

Cross of Pawnee x Greenriver; Protogynous; appears scab resistant; nuts ripen two weeks before Kanza. Type 2 Pollen.

Gardner

Type 1 pecan with extra-large nuts (63 per pound) similar to Pawnee. Susceptible to scab. Protandrous.

Hark

New, early maturing variety. Vigorous and scab resistant. Excellent production of rounded, light-colored nuts. Type I (Protandrous).

Kanza

Good yields of high quality nuts for northern pecan producers. Cold and scab-resistant. Type I (Protogynous).

Lakota

Cross-pollinates successfully with pecan cultivars 'Pawnee', 'Osage, and 'Giles'. Early nut maturity like 'Giles. Type II (Protogynous).

Liberty (KT 316)

Cross of Pawnee x Greenriver; Protogynous; Scab resistant; larger nuts that ripen average of nine days before Kanza. Type 1 Pollen. (Protandrous)

Oswego

Scab-resistant, sturdy. Good crop of medium-sized nuts mid-October. Pollinate with 'Pawnee', 'Major' or 'Shepherd. Type II (Protogynous).

Pawnee

Smaller tree size makes good choice for orchards with limited area. Exceptional pollinator. Large, sweet nuts. Type I (Protandrous).

Shepherd

Native selection with well-filled, easy-shelling nuts of good shape. Consistent production. Disease-resistant, good tree structure. Type I (Protandrous).

Thayer (KT 255)

Cross of Pawnee x Greenriver; Protogynous; Large nuts ripen average of six days before Kanza. Type 1 Pollen.

Yates

Heavy crop of extra large (60 per pound), very thin shelled nuts.



Making money with Pecan

Pecans offer multiple ways to profit with a good plan:

- ✓ **Choose the Ideal Location:** Opt for a sunny area with deep, well-drained soil.
- ✓ **Select Your Trees:** Combine early and late pollen varieties for effective pollination.
- ✓ **Plan Your Layout:** Begin with 35-foot spacing, reducing density as trees mature.
- ✓ **Reap the Rewards:** Gather nuts in the fall and market them fresh, roasted, or as value-added products such as pecan butter.

Pecans are a valuable addition to any farm, offering high returns, longevity, and versatility. By following these simple guidelines and exercising patience, you can establish and maintain a successful pecan orchard that produces for generations.





Fast Facts:

- > **Range:**
Zones 4-8, tolerating temps as low as -20°F.
- > **Growth:**
40 to 60 feet tall and wide, developing a broad, rounded canopy and moderate growth rate of about 1-2 feet per year.
- > **Lifespan:** 50-150 years of reliable production.

CASTANEA

Chestnut



A Resilient Crop with Rising Profits

Chestnuts are making a triumphant comeback—and they're a landowner's dream. Once devastated by chestnut blight in the early 1900s, today's blight-resistant hybrids of Chinese (*Castanea mollissima*) and European-Japanese (*C. sativa* x *C. crenata*) chestnuts are thriving, offering a low-maintenance, high-return crop. These cold-hardy trees—resilient enough for temperatures as low as -20°F—produce starchy, gluten-free nuts with a mild, nutty flavor, perfect for baked goods, flours, and health-conscious recipes. With a lifespan of 100-150 years and fruit production beginning in just 3-4 years, chestnuts provide both quick gains and long-term benefits. Moreover, demand is rapidly increasing, driven by gluten-free and low-fat food trends, making now the ideal time to plant.

Why Choose Chestnut

- ✓ **Market Surge:** Capitalize on the booming demand for gluten-free, nutrient-packed foods by selling fresh nuts, flours, or value-added products like chestnut butter or snacks.
- ✓ **Fast Payoff:** Unlike most tree crops, chestnuts bear nuts in 3-4 years and reach full production by year 7—a speedy return on a perennial investment.
- ✓ **Tested Tough:** Blight-resistant hybrids guarantee consistent yields without the challenges of the past.
- ✓ **Flexible Fit:** Trees ranging from medium size (40 to 60 feet) are appropriate for orchards of any size.



CASTANEA Chestnut

Cultivation Essentials

Chestnuts are easy to grow and ideal for beginners. Here's how to cultivate them successfully:

Soil and Site Selection:

- > Thrives in deep, well-drained loams with a moisture content and a pH of 6.5 to 7.0. Avoid heavy clay or waterlogged areas.
- > Space trees 20 feet apart at planting, thinning them to 40 feet as they mature.

Light and Water:

- > Full sun is essential for optimal yields.
- > Water young trees to help establish their roots; mature trees can withstand dry spells.

Pruning and Care:

- > Lightly prune in late winter to shape or remove dead branches; chestnuts require minimal trimming.
- > Add mulch around the base to retain moisture and help prevent weeds.

Pollination:

- > Wind-pollinated; plant at least two varieties within 200 feet to achieve cross-pollination. Add pollen-producers for male-sterile hybrids.

Timeline:

- > **Bloom:** June (small, cream-colored flowers).
- > **Harvest:** Mid-September to October; nuts drop when they are ripe.
- > **First Nuts:** 3 to 4 years after planting.





Potential Challenges (and Solutions)

Chestnuts keep things simple, but a few issues might arise:



Pests: Chestnut weevils can eat nuts. Set traps or apply organic sprays if they appear.



Diseases: Phytophthora or oak root rot can hit in poorly drained soils. Focus on good site prep and spacing.



Blight: While modern grafted hybrids are resistant, monitor for any suspicious branches and prune them as needed.

Making money with Chestnuts

Chestnuts open up multiple revenue streams:

- ✓ **Fresh Sales:** Sell at farmers' markets or to restaurants—emphasize their gluten-free benefit.
- ✓ **Value-Added Products:** Transform nuts into flours, purees, or snacks for greater profits.
- ✓ **Agroforestry Bonus:** Combine well with understory crops such as berries.



Improved Chinese chestnut

is a medium to large understory tree with a broad crown and larger, high-quality nuts (2-3 cm each) in spiny cupules.

Selected for yield and market appeal. They're ideal for commercial growers seeking top performers.

Benton Harbor (grafted, *C. mollissima*)

Vigorous and blight-resistant with medium-large nuts (34-38 per pound). Perfect for northern Midwest climates like Michigan. Do not plant within 500-1000 feet of 'Colossal' trees.

Eaton (grafted, *C. mollissima*)

Sweet, medium-large nuts (32-40 per pound) that store well. Cold-hardy with large, spreading growth habit and fertile pollen, this cultivar is resistant to chestnut blight.

Gideon (grafted, *C. mollissima*)

High yields of uniform, easy-to-peel nuts (28-38 per pound). Early harvest, cold-hardy, and disease-resistant.

Homestead, grafted

A reliable producer of medium to large nuts (30-40 per pound) featuring a sweet flavor and firm texture. Resistant to blight and cold hardy, these nuts ripen in late September.

Luvall's Monster

Hybrid cross between American hybrids and Chinese cultivars, specifically designed to be twice as productive as Chinese chestnuts and exceptionally cold-hardy to zone 4b. This variety produces early, yielding medium to extra-large Chinese-type nuts. It is pollen-sterile, so compatible pollenizers must be nearby.

Peach, grafted

A slow-growing, blight-resistant Chinese chestnut variety that matures mid-season. Typical yields of large nuts are influenced by extremely low temperatures, which can result in nuts with less flavor.

Qing (grafted, *C. mollissima*)

Compact trees that produce large, sweet nuts in the mid-season. They are productive and resistant to blight.

Sleeping Giant, grafted

A fertile hybrid cultivar known for its reliable blight resistance and large, spreading growth habit. It yields many small to medium-sized sweet, easy-to-peel nuts that mature early in the season. This tree is commonly grown for timber.

*Cultivars are grafted hybrids of *C. sativa* x *C. crenata*.

Bouche de Betizac, hybrid *

This hybrid of the Bouche Rouge and Japanese chestnuts boasts an upright growth habit and produces well. The burrs yield three equally sized nuts that drop from the burr in early to mid-season. Refrigerated nuts can be kept for up to four weeks. This variety does not produce pollen. The best pollinators for Bouche de Betizac are Belle Epine, Precoce Migoule, and Marival. It is tolerant to blight and can withstand cold temperatures down to -30°F.

Colossal, hybrid *

Fast-growing with large nuts (20-30 per pound). Requires a pollinator such as 'Precoce Migoule' or 'Labor Day.' There is a slight risk of blight.

Labor Day, hybrid *

Dependable medium nuts (32-40 per pound) and early pollen for hybrids such as 'Colossal.' Resistant to blight.

Marigoule, hybrid *

A slow-growing French hybrid that produces medium to large nuts in the burr during mid-season fall. It has a moderate yield of sweet nuts that are easy to peel after curing for a few days. This hybrid exhibits a more upright growth habit compared to most others. It is resistant to blight and root rot, with cold tolerance down to -30°F. An excellent pollinator for pollen-sterile hybrids, it includes varieties such as Colossal, Bouche de Betizac, and Marrone.

Marsol, hybrid *

French hybrid that produces large to very large nuts with excellent flavor, naturally detaching from the burr in mid-season. The trees exhibit a strong, upright growth habit and bud early in the spring. It serves as a good pollinator and is cold-tolerant down to -30°F. Additionally, it is resistant to root rot.

Marival, hybrid *

French hybrid with an upright growth habit that yields average production levels. Large, deep red nuts drop freely from the burr in mid- to late-season and store well. It produces pollen abundantly, capable of pollinating trees over 150 feet away. This variety is blight-resistant and can endure cold temperatures as low as -30°F. Additionally, it demonstrates resistance to root rot.

Precoce Migoule, hybrid *

French hybrid that demonstrates vigorous, upright growth and yields abundant early pollen. It is ideal for pollinating 'Colossal.' The nuts are medium to large, slightly flattened (28-32 per pound), and mature earlier than 'Colossal.'

Chestnuts are a low-risk, high-reward choice. Their quick start, blight resistance, and long productive life make them an agroforestry winner. Start small—10 trees could yield 200-300 pounds annually by year 7—and scale up as profits roll in.





Fast Facts:

- > **Range:**
Zones 4-8. Adaptable to temperate climates (well-suited to regions with cold winters and moderate summers.)
- > **Growth:**
Compact habit typically 10-15 feet tall, 8-10 feet wide
- > **Lifespan:**
Approximately 40 years

CORYLUS

Filbert (Hazelnut)



A Nutty Profit-Maker for Your Farm

Hazelnuts, also known as filberts, are more than just a delicious treat—they're a wise investment for your farm. These versatile nuts are gaining popularity, appearing in a wide variety of products, from gourmet foods like spreads and candies to coffee flavoring, cosmetics, and even biofuels.

With their rich, buttery flavor and heart-healthy nutrients—such as monounsaturated fats that help lower LDL cholesterol, antioxidants, and essential vitamins and minerals—they're a consumer favorite. Their relatively quick turnaround—harvestable in as little as two years—and a productive lifespan of about 40 years make them a landowner's dream.

Hazelnut trees thrive in various climates and soil types, from the Pacific Northwest to the Mediterranean. Combined with hazelnuts' smaller size, they're a perfect additional crop for many farms. The growing global demand for hazelnuts means farmers can count on a steady and rewarding return from this versatile crop.

Why Choose Hazelnut

- ✓ **Blooming Market:** Demand for hazelnuts is rising in spreads (like Nutella), confections, oils, and more. This trend indicates stable sales for growers.
- ✓ **Nutrition Powerhouse:** Packed with folate, B vitamins, and healthy fats, they appeal to wellness-focused buyers, giving them a built-in marketing edge.
- ✓ **Versatile Revenue:** In addition to nuts, hazelnut oil can fuel your farm's biodiesel or become another product to market.



CORYLUS Hazelnut

Cultivation Essentials

Hazelnuts are low-maintenance and high-reward. Here's what you need to know to grow them successfully:

Soil and Site Selection:

- > Choose a spot with loamy, well-drained soil (pH 6.0-7.0) that stays moist but won't waterlog roots. Once established, the plants will adapt to clay or drier conditions.
- > Space trees 15-20 feet apart

Light and Water:

- > Strive for a minimum of 4 hours of direct sunlight each day to enhance nut production.

Pruning and Care:

- > Prune them into neat, vase-like forms for easier harvesting, or allow them to develop into natural thickets if you prefer a more hands-off approach

Pollination:

- > Plant 2-3 compatible varieties within 15 feet of each other for cross-pollination, which is essential for big yields.

Timeline:

- > **Bloom:** Late winter to early spring (peak pollination)
- > **Fast Start:** First nuts in the second year, with strong crops beginning to yield between 2-5 years.
- > **Harvest:** August to October. The nuts drop naturally, so shake branches or collect them from the ground.
- > **Longevity:** Approximately 40 years of production, making hazelnuts a reliable, long-term cash crop.





Potential Challenges (and Solutions)

Hazelnuts are hardy, but a few issues might pop up. Here's how to handle them:



Eastern Filbert Blight (EFB): Fungal disease that can form cankers on branches. To avoid it, opt for resistant varieties like 'Grand Traverse' or 'The Beast' to dodge it.



Pests and Mildew: Filbertworm or powdery mildew may appear. Use organic sprays or encourage natural predators to keep them at bay.



Maintenance Tip: In late winter, prune dead or overcrowded branches to improve airflow and support tree health.

Pruning Boosts Productivity

Video that demonstrates effective pruning methods to increase the productivity of fruit and nut trees.





Grand Traverse (C. avellana x C. colurna)

A mid-season hybrid with large, round nuts. It is resistant to EFB and cold hardy to zone 5. Pair it with 'The Beast' or American filbert for pollination.

The Beast PPAF™ (C. avellana x C. americana)

Officially designated as OSU 541.147, this variety was developed and released by the Hybrid Hazelnut Consortium. It produces early to mid-season nuts and is cold hardy to zone 5 (possibly 4). It pairs well with 'Grand Traverse.'

American Filbert (C. americana)

This native shrub produces smaller, sweet nuts. It requires low maintenance and serves as an excellent pollinator for hybrids.





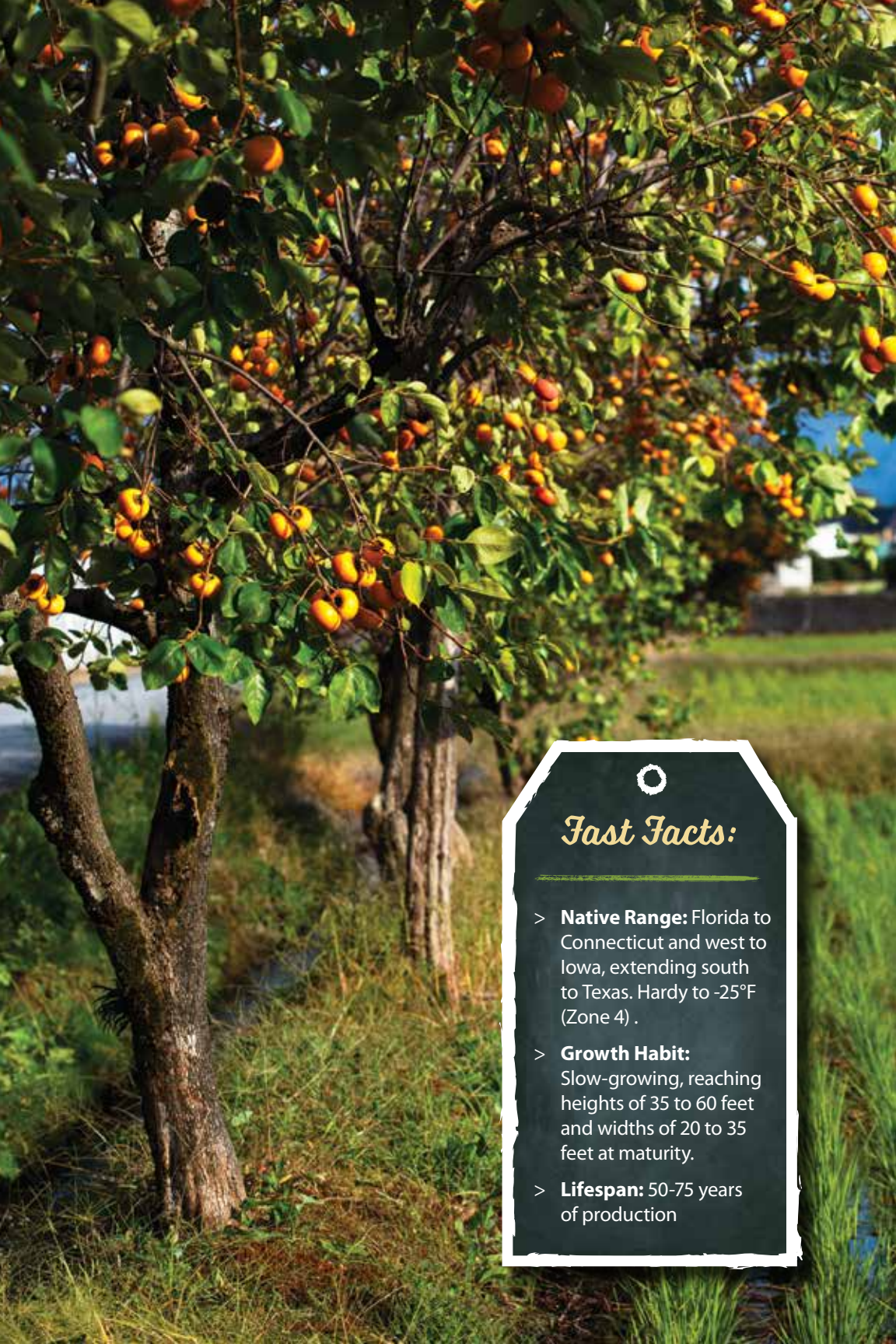
Making money with Hazelnut

Hazelnut offers multiple ways to profit with a good plan:

- ✓ **Choose the Ideal Location:** Sunny, well-drained location that offers plenty of room for growth.
- ✓ **Select Your Trees:** Choose 2-3 compatible cultivars to ensure successful pollination.
- ✓ **Plan Your Layout:** Space trees 15 to 20 feet apart; plant in spring or fall.
- ✓ **Tend as Needed:** Prune for shape or allow them to naturalize—it's your decision.
- ✓ **Harvest the Rewards:** Collect nuts from late summer to early fall and observe your profits increase.

Hazelnuts offer a compelling opportunity for farmers seeking a resilient, profitable, and sustainable crop. With their quick turnaround time, long productive lifespan, and minimal maintenance needs, they are well-suited to a variety of farm setups. By selecting compatible varieties, ensuring proper pollination, and following basic care guidelines, you can establish a thriving orchard that yields for decades.





Fast Facts:

- > **Native Range:** Florida to Connecticut and west to Iowa, extending south to Texas. Hardy to -25°F (Zone 4) .
- > **Growth Habit:** Slow-growing, reaching heights of 35 to 60 feet and widths of 20 to 35 feet at maturity.
- > **Lifespan:** 50-75 years of production

DIOSPYROS

Persimmon

A Versatile and Low-Maintenance Cash Crop

Persimmons are overlooked gems in the world of specialty crops.

These hardy, adaptable trees produce delicious, nutrient-rich fruit packed with vitamins A and C, fiber, and antioxidants, offering significant health benefits and culinary versatility. Their unique, sweet flavor and smooth texture shine whether eaten fresh or in dishes like salads and desserts.

For landowners, persimmons provide a low-maintenance, long-term investment, while their vibrant fall foliage and wildlife appeal enhance ecological and economic value.

Why Choose Persimmon

- ✓ **Nutritional and Culinary Appeal:** Persimmon fruits are packed with vitamins A and C and boast a sweet, apricot-like flavor that pairs well with many foods. Their bright orange color makes them visually appealing for fresh eating, jams, pies, or even persimmon pudding—a traditional treat that could become your farm's signature product.
- ✓ **Market Appeal:** As consumer interest in unique, locally grown produce continues to rise, persimmons occupy a niche market. Their late harvest season, from October to November, enhances your income potential during the fall.
- ✓ **Wildlife Benefits:** Persimmons attract wildlife like deer and birds, enhancing biodiversity and offering potential for hunting leases or ecotourism ventures.
- ✓ **Low Maintenance:** Once established, persimmon trees flourish with minimal care. They are drought-tolerant, resistant to most pests and diseases, and adaptable to a variety of soils.



DIOSPYROS Persimmon

Cultivation Essentials

Growing persimmons is straightforward, making it ideal for landowners who are new to fruit crops or looking for low-effort options. Here's what you need to succeed:

Soil and Site Selection:

- > Persimmons thrive in a variety of soils, from light sandy to heavy, wet types. They prefer moderately well-drained soil with a pH of 6.0-7.0.
- > Space trees 20 to 24 feet apart to allow for their mature size.

Light and Water:

- > They can tolerate some shade but require full sun for fruit to ripen properly.
- > Water young trees regularly until rooted, then rely on their drought tolerance.

Pruning and Care:

- > Persimmons are among the easiest fruit trees to grow, as they experience few pest and disease problems. After establishing a modified central leader form, prune

lightly and thin out vigorous growth as needed.

- > Fertilizer is seldom needed unless soil tests indicate deficiencies.

Pollination:

- > Persimmons are dioecious, meaning they have male (staminate) and female (pistillate) trees. Most American cultivars require one male pollinizer for every five to six female trees to produce fruit.
- > Self-fertile options like 'Meader' and 'Yates' simplify planting for smaller farms.

Timeline:

- > **Bloom:** April to June
- > **Harvest:** October to November (frost brings out the sweetness of the fruit)
- > **First Fruits:** 5-6 years for native trees, 2-3 years for grafted ones





Potential Challenges (and Solutions)

Persimmons are resilient, but here are a few issues to watch for:



Diseases: Phytophthora root rot, crown gall, and angular leaf spot are rare diseases. Ensure proper drainage to prevent them.



Pests: Twig girdlers, persimmon borers, and scale insects may appear. Monitor and promptly prune affected areas.



Sunscald: Young trees in hot climates may require trunk wrapping or shade to prevent damage.

Benefits of RPM

See the advantages of the Root Production Method (RPM), a patented process that speeds plant growth, resilience, and survivability.





*American persimmon grafted cultivars of *D. virginiana*.*

Delight 100-46

Heavy yields of large, flavorful fruit with smooth, clear pulp. Self-pollinating and resistant to diseases.

Barbara's Blush

Great flavor and large fruit. Resistant to diseases and ideal for fresh market sales.

Early Golden

This variety ripens early in September and produces sweet, medium-to-large fruit with few seeds and thin skin. It is excellent for early markets.

Garretson

Hardy in Zone 4b, ripens early (October), producing small to medium-sized, rich-flavored fruit with high yields.

Lena (also known as 'Mitche' or 'Mitchellena')

Winner of the Mitchell Persimmon Festival in 1955. The fruit is squat and soft, featuring tender skin and an attractive red color. It's great for cooking. The flavor retains its quality when frozen into pulp. It ripens early and lasts over a long period.

Meador

Zone 4a hardy, self-fertile, and seedless. Medium (1.5-inch) fruit with a sweet flavor and a narrow, ornamental form.

Nikita's Gift™ (grafted American-Asian hybrid)

Self-fertile, hardy to -10°F, and smaller (10-12 feet), it yields sweet, red-orange fruit (2.5") by mid-to-late October.

Prok

Large (2.25 inches), nearly seedless fruit with a heavy yield. Its striking foliage enhances its ornamental appeal.

Yates

Hardy in Zone 5a, self-fertile, with large (2.5") flavorful fruit and high productivity.

Casandra (Asian/American Crosses - *D. kaki* x *D. virginiana*)

Stellar hybrid of 'virginiana' x 'kaki'; one of the best Asian/American crosses. The fruit is high in sugar and considered one of the best-tasting varieties. The fruit ripens mid-season and is hardy down to Zone 5 (-20°F), growing well in areas typically seen as too cold to produce quality, medium-sized fruit about three inches in diameter.



Making money with Persimmon

Persimmon offers multiple ways to profit with a good plan:

- ✓ **Fresh fruit:** Farmers' markets, CSAs, farm stands, and organic certification.
- ✓ **Value-added Product:** Persimmon jams, jellies, or dried slices
- ✓ **Wholesale:** Supply to wineries, distilleries, or health stores.
- ✓ **Online:** Build a website or sell on e-commerce sites.
- ✓ **Build your brand:** Promote sustainability to enhance marketability and customer loyalty.

Persimmons are a low-risk, high-reward crop for landowners. Their adaptability, minimal upkeep, and long lifespan make them a smart agroforestry addition. Whether you're drawn to their ecological perks, market potential, or simply the satisfaction of growing something distinctive, persimmons deliver. Start small with a few self-fertile trees, and watch this specialty crop become a farm favorite.





Fast Facts:

- > **Native Range:**
Black Walnut: Zones 4-8
Butternut: Zone 3
- > **Growth:**
50-75 feet tall,
50-75 feet wide
- > **Lifespan:** All species
long-lived. Orchards
can remain productive
for more than 50 years.

JUGLANS Walnuts



A Legacy Crop for Your Farm

Imagine planting a tree that can provide both delicious, protein-rich nuts and highly valuable hardwood. Different walnut varieties are typically optimized for either nut production or timber quality, allowing you to diversify your farm with two high-value, long-term crops. By carefully selecting the right variety, you can tailor your grove to your goals—whether maximizing nut yield or producing quality lumber. Best of all, walnut trees are remarkably long-lived, often thriving for generations, making them a true legacy crop that your grandchildren may harvest from the trees you plant today.

Why Choose Walnuts

- ✓ **Two Premium Products:** Walnut trees produce both nuts and timber. The nuts boast the highest protein content of any tree nut, along with a bold, distinctive flavor. The wood—particularly from black walnut (*Juglans nigra*)—is valued for its strength, durability, and beauty, making it a popular choice for furniture, cabinetry, and veneers.
- ✓ **Long-Term Income:** Walnut orchards can remain productive for over 50 years. While it takes time to reach peak production, mature trees offer steady returns for decades.
- ✓ **Strong Market Demand:** The U.S. dominates global walnut production, with strong demand for both nuts and lumber. Black walnut timber fetches premium prices, while the nuts attract health-conscious consumers and specialty markets.
- ✓ **Ecological Benefits:** Walnut trees' deep roots improve soil health, store carbon, reduce erosion, and provide habitat for wildlife. Their wide canopies also offer shade and windbreaks, enhancing your farm's ecosystem.



JUGLANS Walnuts

Cultivation Essentials

Growing walnuts is straightforward, making it ideal for landowners who are new to nut crops or looking for low-effort options. Here's what you need to succeed:

Soil and Site Selection:

- > Plant spring or fall, when the soil is workable.
- > Walnuts thrive in deep, fertile, well-drained soil. Test your soil and amend it to reach the right pH (pH 5.0-7.5) and nutrient levels. Walnuts love organic matter.
- > Plant trees 40-80 feet apart to accommodate their wide canopies. Keep them at least 50 feet from other trees or shrubs due to juglone.

Light and Water:

- > Full sun (6-8 hours daily).
- > For optimal results, 42-45 inches of precipitation and 140 or more frost-free days per year.

Pruning and Care:

- > Mulch around young trees to retain moisture and suppress weeds. Protect them from deer and rodents with tree guards.

Pollination:

- > Walnuts need cross-pollination. Plant at least two cultivars—one protandrous (male flowers first) and one protogynous (female flowers first)—to ensure a good yield.
- > Staminate (male) and pistillate (female) flowers of walnut cultivars open at different times, which prevent a tree from self-pollination. Cultivars with male flowers opening first are termed protandrous. When the female flowers open first, the cultivar is protogynous. Black walnut orchards must contain at least two walnut cultivars, one each protandrous and protogynous, for proper pollination and best yields.

Timeline:

- > **Bloom:** Match bloom times (April-May) for best results
- > **Harvest:** September-October
- > **First Nuts:** 4 to 6 years





Potential Challenges (and Solutions)

Walnuts are resilient, but a few hurdles can arise. Here's how to tackle them:



Diseases and Pests: Thousand Cankers Disease (TCD) is a devastating disease affecting black walnut trees. It's caused by a fungus called *Geosmithia morbida*, which is spread by the walnut twig beetle. The disease results in numerous small cankers on the bark, eventually leading to branch and tree death. Also, watch for walnut blight, anthracnose, and butternut canker. Regular orchard and taking proactive measures will help keep these issues in check.



Frost Risk: Late spring frosts can damage blossoms. Select cultivars that bloom later in areas susceptible to frost.



Wildlife: Squirrels and birds enjoy walnuts. Employ netting or deterrents to safeguard your harvest.

Grafting for Consistent Crops

Video exploring the grafting process and how it can be used to ensure consistent and high-quality crop yields.





**All cultivars are grafted hybrids of *J. nigra*, except for Perdue (#1 seedling)*

Two native walnut species dominate North American agroforestry: black walnut (*Juglans nigra*) and **butternut** (*Juglans cinerea*, also called white walnut). Both offer valuable nuts and timber, but they differ in key ways that could influence your choice.

Timber: Durability Meets Beauty

- > **Black Walnut:** Known for its dark, rich heartwood, black walnut is a woodworking favorite. Its strength, decay resistance, and consistent grain make it ideal for high-end furniture and cabinetry. Timber harvests after 30-50 years can yield top-dollar returns.
- > **Butternut:** Characterized by its lighter, pale brown wood and wavy grain, butternut is softer and less durable than black walnut. While it is prone to decay, it excels in carved pieces, paneling, and specialty projects. Bonus: in colder climates, you can tap butternut trees for syrup.

Nuts: Flavor and Function

- > **Black Walnut:** These nuts pack a bold, earthy punch—perfect for adventurous eaters and specialty markets. They're tough to crack, but their high protein content and rich flavor make them worth the effort.
- > **Butternut:** Milder and buttery, butternuts are more lovable. Their shells are smoother, and the nuts are a treat fresh or roasted. Additionally, their light-colored bark makes these trees easy to identify.

Black Walnut Cultivars*

Most landowners choose **black walnut** for its excellent timber and nut production. If you opt for black walnut, choosing the right cultivar for your site and goals is crucial.

- > **Emma Kay:** A heavy producer with excellent flavor and easy-to-crack nuts.
- > **Quick Crop:** Starts bearing in just 2-3 years—ideal if you're eager for early returns.
- > **Sauber:** Boasts a whopping 48% kernel, perfect for maximizing nut yield.
- > **Sparrow:** Reliable and sweet, with great cracking qualities.
- > **Thomas Black:** Large, thin-shelled nuts with a rich, classic walnut flavor.
- > **UMCA® Hickman:** From the University of Missouri-Columbia, Center for Agroforestry: a high-yielding, early bearing black walnut cultivar with up to 36% kernel percentage. Suited for commercial nut production in orchards and agroforestry, it offers increased early harvests and improved economic returns.
- > **Perdue #1 Seedling:** Produced from seed collected in an open-pollinated orchard of grafted Purdue #1. Valuable timber tree. Vigorous, straight growth. Excellent flavored nut.



Timeline & Profitability Walnut

Walnuts require patience, but they provide great rewards. Here's what to expect:

- ✓ **First Nuts:** Trees begin bearing in 3-7 years depending on the cultivar. Peak nut production starts around age 30.
- ✓ **Timber:** Harvest wood after 30 to 50 years, when trees attain a marketable size.
- ✓ **Biennial Bearing:** Walnuts typically yield larger crops every other year—anticipate variable yields.
- ✓ **Costs:** Upfront expenses include trees, soil preparation, and irrigation. Maintenance costs decrease as trees mature.
- ✓ **Returns:** Nuts, particularly organic or specialty varieties, can command high prices. Timber sales provide a significant lump sum after decades of growth.

Walnuts provide a unique combination of nutrition, value, and sustainability—ideal for landowners with patience and a long-term vision. They require space, a juglone strategy, and time to mature, but the payoff is a crop that benefits generations to come.

If you have the right soil, climate, and growing space, walnuts could be your farm's next big win. Begin by assessing your land, selecting cultivars that align with your goals, and contacting local extension services or walnut growers for expert advice.

Final Thoughts



Fast Facts:

- > **Native Range:**
Thrives in Zones 3-8.
- > **Growth Habit:**
American Plum (15-35 feet); Chokeberry (up to 30 feet); Black Cherry (up to 100 feet)
- > **Lifespan:** 20 to 30 years for plums and chokecherries, even longer for black cherry.

PRUNUS

Plum

Versatile Trees for Fruit, Wildlife, & Conservation

Imagine a tree that produces delicious fruit for your kitchen, nurtures wildlife, and enhances your land—all with minimal effort. Meet the Prunus family, featuring American plum, chokecherry, and black cherry.

These native trees are ideal for landowners seeking a low-maintenance cash crop to diversify their farm. The American plum offers sweet, juicy fruit perfect for jams or fresh eating, while chokecherries deliver tart berries ideal for jellies and syrups. Black cherries, with their rich flavor, shine in pies and wines.

Beyond harvests, Prunus trees support pollinators with spring blossoms, provide wildlife habitats, and control erosion with deep roots. Their vibrant fall foliage adds lasting beauty.

Why Choose Plums

- ✓ **Cash Crop Potential:** Their fruits are perfect in pastries, preserves, wine, and liquors—a tasty revenue stream. Wildlife also relish the soft mast, appealing to hunters or nature enthusiasts.
- ✓ **Pollinator Boost:** Fragrant spring flowers attract bees, increasing honey production and benefiting local ecosystems.
- ✓ **Soil Stability:** Vigorous roots anchor the soil, making these trees natural choices for erosion control and conservation.
- ✓ **Easy Care:** Shade-tolerant and adaptable, they thrive with little fuss in varied conditions.



PRUNUS Plum

Cultivation Essentials

Growing Prunus trees is straightforward if you cover the essentials:

Soil and Site Selection:

- > Prefer well-drained, rocky, or sandy soils with a pH between 6.0 and 7.5. Avoid heavy clay or wet areas.
- > Plant early spring or fall, when soil is workable, 10-14 feet apart, with rows 16-18 feet apart, to accommodate their spreading nature.

Light and Water:

- > Full sun to partial shade. Full sun maximizes fruit yield.
- > Water moderately—can tolerate drought once established, but benefits from consistent moisture during fruiting.

Pruning and Care:

- > These trees sucker freely, forming thickets. They're excellent for wildlife or soil management, but keep them under control if you prefer a tidy orchard.
- > Pruning—use a light touch—remove dead or crowded branches in late winter to enhance shape and health.

Pollination:

- > Self-pollinating—no need for multiple trees, though extras boost production.

Timeline:

- > **Bloom:** Late March to early April
- > **Harvest:** Late spring to early autumn
- > **First Fruits:** 4 to 7 years





Potential Challenges (and Solutions)

Prunus native species resist most issues, but here are a few to watch for:



Diseases and Pests: Watch for black knots or caterpillars and clean up fallen debris to stay ahead.



Wildlife: Soft mast draws birds fast. Harvest promptly or share with nature.



Safety Alert: Leaves, bark, and pits contain hydrocyanic acid that is toxic. Keep livestock away and handle with care.

How to Plant a Tree

Video providing a step-by-step guide on the proper techniques for planting a tree to ensure its health and longevity.





American Plum (*Prunus americana*)

- > **Snapshot:** A small tree (15-35 feet) with scaly black bark, a rounded crown, and thorny branches. In spring, it produces white flowers that develop into 1-inch red plums by late summer. Fall leaves glow golden yellow to ruby red.
- > **Why Grow It:** Disease-resistant and adaptable, it's a low-effort winner. The fruits are sweet for fresh eating or making jellies, and wildlife enjoy them. Spreading roots are excellent for erosion control.

Variety highlight:

Chickasaw plum (*P. angustifolia*) – Twiggy, thicket-forming tree similar to American plum. Fragrant white flowers bloom in spring in flat-topped clusters. Yellow fruit matures to red in late summer. Branches have thorny side branches. Pale-yellow fall foliage.

Chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*)

- > **Snapshot:** A medium-sized understory tree (up to 30 feet) that produces clusters of white flowers in spring. Its red fruits mature to a dark purple color from June to August. The dark green leaves have serrated edges.
- > **Why Grow It:** Initially tart, the fruits become sweet when ripe—making them ideal for preserves or jelly. Birds and small mammals gather around it, boosting your farm's biodiversity.
- > **Taste Note:** Unripe chokecherries can make your mouth pucker. Allow them to ripen or cook them down before consuming.

Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina*)

- > **Snapshot:** A towering native tree reaching up to 100 feet) with drooping racemes of white flowers. Dark red fruit transforms to black by late summer. The bark and crushed leaves smell like cherries.
- > **Why Grow It:** Beyond fruit for wine or syrup, its premium timber is ideal for furniture. Wildlife love its soft mast fruit, and fall foliage dazzles in yellow.
- > **Big Perk:** A long-term investment with timber value and an impressive presence.



Making money with Plums

Pick your *Prunus* fit and harvest the bounty:

- ✓ **American Plum:** Sweet and juicy—enjoy fresh or process into jams and wine. Also great for erosion control.
- ✓ **Chokeberry:** Tart-to-sweet—ideal for cooked goods like syrups or preserves, and has wildlife appeal.
- ✓ **Black Cherry:** Small but bold—craft into liqueurs or leave for wildlife. Long-term investment with timber value.

Plum trees blend profit, ecology, and beauty with minimal upkeep. They are a smart agroforestry option for landowners seeking a long-lasting crop—20 to 30 years for plums and chokecherries, even longer for black cherry. If you've got well-drained soil and a sunny spot, they are a natural fit. Choose American plum for improving soil health, chokecherry for making preserves, or black cherry for its timber potential. Consult your local extension office or *Prunus* growers for site-specific advice, then plant away. These trees don't just grow—they enhance your farm for years to come.





Fast Facts:

- > **Native Range:**
Thrives in Zones 3-8.
- > **Growth Habit:**
6 to 12 feet high
8 to 10 feet wide
- > **Yield:**
Mature plants produce
10-15 pounds yearly.
- > **Lifespan:**
Up to 20 years

SAMBUCUS

Elderberry



Versatile Agroforestry Cash Crop for Landowners

Elderberries, once overlooked as mere wild shrubs, have emerged as a profitable opportunity for landowners, blending versatility with low upkeep. Their tiny, dark purple to black berries shine in preserves, wines, and pastries, while their dense branches and juicy fruit draw wildlife, offering nesting sites and cover. For farmers eyeing diversification, elderberries promise quick returns, ecological perks, and rising market demand—all in one easy-to-grow package.

Known as American elder (*Sambucus canadensis*), this short, deciduous shrub flourishes along streambanks, moist woodlands, thickets, and fence rows. In spring, large, flat-topped flower clusters bloom, luring butterflies and pollinators. By late summer to early fall, these transform into cymes of berries, ripe for harvest. With minimal care and broad adaptability, elderberries fuse profitability with sustainable farming.

Why Choose Elderberry

- ✓ **Culinary Uses:** Berries excel in jams, jellies, wines, and baked goods.
- ✓ **Medicinal Value:** Elderflowers possess antiseptic and anti-inflammatory properties, which are valued in health products.
- ✓ **Ecological Benefits:** The shrub's nectar-rich flowers support bees and honey production, while its vigorous roots and branching make it perfect for conservation plantings, windbreaks, and erosion control.



SAMBUCUS Elderberry

Cultivation Essentials

The Elderberry is a multi-purpose powerhouse, but make sure you cover the essentials:

Soil and Site Selection:

- > Prefers moist, fertile, well-drained soil with a pH between 5.5 and 6.5. Poor drainage is a dealbreaker.
- > For best results, plant elderberries in masses and let them naturalize. This will enhance your land's productivity and biodiversity.
- > Space plants 3 to 12 feet apart based on your equipment and harvest plans.

Light and Water:

- > Full sun maximizes fruit yield, although partial shade is effective as well (6 or more hours of direct sun is ideal).
- > Maintain moist soil during the first year; use mulch to retain moisture and combat weeds.

Pruning and Care:

- > Prune in late winter. Remove dead or weak canes, keeping a mix of one-, two-, and three-year-old canes for steady harvests.
- > In early spring, apply a balanced fertilizer, but be careful not to use too much—excess nitrogen can lower fruit yield.

Pollination:

- > Self-pollinating—no need for multiple trees, though extras boost production.

Timeline:

- > **Bloom:** June-July
- > **Harvest:** August to September. Berries are ripe when they are deep purple-black and the clusters droop. Snip whole clusters—gloves help with staining.
- > **First Fruit:** Year two





Potential Challenges (and Solutions)

Elderberry is tough, but stay vigilant:



Diseases: The most common virus affecting elderberry, is Tomato Ringspot Virus (TmRSV). This virus weakens the plant, reduces fruit production, and can even cause death. Also, canker, rust, powdery mildew, and leaf spots.

Fix: Promote air circulation; remove affected parts fast.



Pests: Japanese beetles, cane borers, mites, aphids.

Fix: Try neem oil or beneficial insects.



Stay Alert: Check plants during bloom and fruiting to catch problems early.

Pruning Boosts Productivity

Video that demonstrates effective pruning methods to increase the productivity of fruit and nut trees.





Choose cultivars based on your goals and climate:

Adams

Classic choice for wine and jelly. Big clusters, hardy, and reliable.

Bob Gordon

Large berries on first-year shoots. Selected near Osceola, MO.

Pocahontas

High yields, late ripening (10 days after 'Bob Gordon'). From Arkansas.

Ranch

Short and compact—easy to harvest.

Wyldeewood

Vigorous, upright, with big clusters. From Eufaula, OK.

York

Biggest berries of all. Grows 6-8 feet, highly productive.

Starter Pick: Pair 'Bob Gordon' and 'Wyldeewood' for dependable yields and pollination.



Marketing Your Harvest

Fresh berries fetch \$3-5 per pound; dried, \$10-15 so market well to sell:

- ✓ **Direct:** Farmers' markets, CSAs, farm stands.
- ✓ **Wholesale:** Supply wineries or health stores.
- ✓ **Online:** Build a website or sell on e-commerce sites.
- ✓ **Story:** Highlight health benefits and local roots.



Making money with Sambucus

Elderberry stands out as a smart agroforestry addition for landowners.

- ✓ **Rising Popularity:** The demand for elderberry products is skyrocketing, particularly in the health and wellness sector, due to their high vitamin C content and reputation for boosting the immune system.
- ✓ **Multiple Income Streams:** You can sell fresh or dried berries or process them into high-value goods like syrups, wines, or elderflower extracts.
- ✓ **Quick Returns:** Unlike most tree crops, elderberries can produce fruit in their second year.
- ✓ **Low Input, High Reward:** They flourish with little maintenance, promoting sustainable farming.
- ✓ **Extra Cash Ideas:** Sell cuttings or plants to other growers; Host U-pick days for agritourism; Market elderflowers to craft brewers.

Elderberry isn't just a crop—it's a long-term investment for your farm. With quick returns, environmental benefits, and a thriving market, it's a specialty crop worth planting.





NRCS cost share for agroforestry projects

Specialty crops and other income-producing trees and shrubs can generate additional income for landowners from timber, nuts and fruit. In addition, these plantings naturally create conservation benefits like erosion control, stormwater filtration, wildlife habitat, lend natural beauty and help protect livestock with cooling shade and protection from wind.

The USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) offers several voluntary programs to provide financial reimbursements to eligible landowners and agricultural producers who manage their land in a sustainable manner. The financial assistance can cover planning and application of conservation practices that save energy, improve soil, water and air resources and protect wildlife on these private lands.

Agroforestry blends agriculture and forestry practices to improve productivity, increase profitability and enrich the stewardship of our natural resources including carbon offsetting and reduction of greenhouse gas.

Cost share programs are particularly suited to agroforestry and specialty crop projects. Add to this the increasing commercial interest in woody specialty crops including elderberry, aronia, chestnut and pecan and it's easy to predict a bright future for these compatible systems and growing government cost sharing.

Examples of available NRCS programs include:

- **Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)** – helps agricultural producers maintain, improve and expand conservation activities to address priority resources concerns. Payments are proportionate to conservation performance.
- **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)** – helps agricultural producers address and correct natural resources concerns.



**Contact your local USDA
office for more details.**

www.nrcs.usda.gov



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