RE: Inquiry about 2013 Pecan Production in Columbia County

I have had many reports at the Extension Office regarding pecan production in 2013. Most contacts stated they had a very light crop. Several have indicated they had zero production in 2013. Typically, pecan growers reported a large crop in 2012. Pecans are strongly “alternate bearing,” so this is an expected pattern. Alternate bearing means that a tree bears a heavy crop one year and a lighter crop the next. This occurs because trees must carry over food/energy reserves over the winter to support its first flush of growth the following spring. The large nut crop produced in the preceding year is a stress on the tree’s energy reserves. There is little time after the nuts mature for the tree to restore its food reserves before the leaves fall. Fortunately with the poor crop in 2013, you would expect the trees to have adequate energy reserves for full production in 2014. Commercial producers will sometimes thin the crop in-season to reduce the tendency to alternate bear.

An additional challenge in 2013 was heavy disease levels due to the consistent and heavy rainfall we received. In high rainfall years we typically see higher incidence of Pecan Scab. This disease can be treated with chemicals. However, there are no custom applicators in the area with equipment suitable for spraying large pecan trees.

Pecan production is a complicated biological system, and low production years can occur as with any farming system. Please contact me if you have any additional concerns.

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