

# Pecan South



Volume 52, No. 3, May 2019

A Historic Moment—  
**The Pecan Congress**

*Want to market effectively?*  
**Better do your research.**

**Pecan flowering**  
*Genesis of the Nut*



*These 'Pawnee' pistillate flowers have turned a dark purplish brown, meaning they're pollinated.*

outer and inner cell layers, thus the release of pollen.

Now, it makes sense that increasingly dry weather conditions, or even increasingly humid conditions, will likely affect the timing and duration of pollen shed and female flower receptivity. Here, in the Southwest, we often have high

wind conditions associated with dry air during the flowering period. These conditions not only shorten the duration of pollen shed but also shorten the period of pistillate (female flower) receptivity due to the flower drying out, no matter the dichogamy type.

If you have ever examined the pistillate flowers when they are mature, you'll notice they all have different shapes, sizes, and colors based on their cultivars but usually always have some sheen to them. This sheen is the moisture on the

stigmatic surface that is an exudate which ensures pollen will secure itself once in contact. Then, when pollinated, the sheen disappears, and these pistillate flowers appear darker. Other cultivars, like 'Pawnee', turn a very dark bronze to purplish color when pollinated.

### **How many pollinizers does it take?**

Nineteen years ago, Bruce Wood published an article in *HortTechnology* on "Pollination Characteristics of Pecan Trees and Orchards." This article gives a complete description of pecan flowering and also eludes to how to achieve maximum pollination and reduced self-pollination that negatively affects yield and quality.

Basically, we need to re-think the use of the recommendation of the 5:5 rule. If you have not heard of this rule, it is described as planting a pollinator tree every fifth tree and every fifth row in a design. However, it is my opinion there is a better recommendation than this. For instance, Heerema suggests, at least for the Southwest 30-foot spacing designs, growers "plant eight rows of the main desired cultivar followed by two rows of the pollinizers, with one cultivar pollinizer in one of these rows and another cultivar pollinizer in the other row."

Wood's research suggests that greatest pollination is gained by having adjacent trees of both types of dichogamy, and the amount of pollen needed to penetrate target trees is more important than the distance the pollen travels. In other words, one may consider planting one type in one row followed by an adjacent row of the other type and repeat the design throughout

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