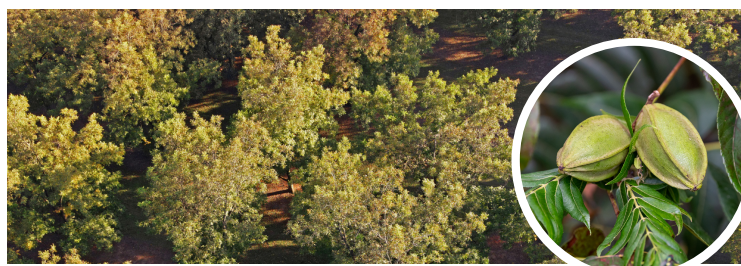


# Pecans



In 2022, the United States produced 275 million pounds of pecans over 407,000 acres of land. Pecans are the only tree nut native to North America. Pecans are mainly grown in orchards, but they are also grown naturally in groves.

Pecans are often grown in the southern United States. In fact, 33% of the pecans grown in the U.S. come from Georgia. While pecans are most popular in the southern states, Illinois grows pecans on about 330 acres. Illinois produces around 152,500 pounds of pecans each year.



Pecans are grown on trees. A natural group of pecan trees is called a grove, while a planted group of pecan trees is called an orchard. It takes one tree five to eight years to produce its first pecans. They can grow up to 100 feet tall and spread 70 feet across. In orchards, it is common for the pecan trees to be planted in straight rows for easier harvesting and maintenance.



Pecans are used in a variety of products. Once shelled, the halves can be baked into pies, candies, and breads. Pecans can also be pressurized to make oil and milk. You can often find pecans in salads, ice cream, and sweet potato recipes. In Illinois, the most popular way to enjoy pecans is in ready-to-eat halves.



# Meet the Voss Family

*Voss Pecans* | Carlyle, IL



## **Tell us about your farm.**

Ralph Voss and family have been bringing farm fresh pecans to Illinois for 30 years. We are a 100% family operated farm, and Illinois' largest pecan farm. All the work done on our 160 acres is by our family and a couple relatives. This includes trimming trees, mowing pecan orchards, shaking trees, picking up sticks, harvesting, sorting, cleaning, cracking, and stocking the farm store shelves. We have 4 generations of family working at Voss Pecans to bring a farm fresh product that we know you will love.

## **How do you prepare pecans to be sold?**

We have four cracking machines, one for each size of pecans we grow. These are electric machines that crack each nut one at a time. They get rid of most of the shell and the pecans come out in perfect halves for eating. The ready to eat pecans are processed at a custom processing plant in Kansas. We take them there whole in the shell, and get our pecans back ready to eat, in 1-pound bags or 30-pound boxes.

## **How do you harvest pecans?**

We have equipment especially for pecans. There is a tree shaker that grasps the tree by the trunk and shakes it. The pecans fall to the ground and the harvester picks up the nuts. The harvester is kind of like a combine, except it has rubber fingers that sweep the nuts into a hopper along with sticks, leaves, and anything on the ground. So we have a cleaning machine that runs at night in the shed and the whole family helps, picking out the good pecans on a moving conveyor table.



*photo courtesy of Voss Pecans*