Doing Things the Right Way!

January 15, 2004

Do you know how to eat spaghetti? Rebecca says not to do it like momma does. Mom only wraps a few noodles at the time. Rebecca says to stick your fork in the middle of the pile and twist it. Get a large ball of noodles on the end of your fork. (Looks like it is about as big as her head!) Then bite off one side like you were eating an apple. This way you can eat and get a beautiful application of spaghetti sauce lipstick at the same time!

Doing things the right way is important. It means the difference between success and failure (or in Rebecca’s case between fun and boredom). Here are some ways to improve some of your gardening methods. Try them. They may be fun!

**Why are my pecans bad on the inside when I crack them?** It is disappointing to crack a pecan, expecting a tasty nut, only to find that the kernel is small, shriveled, black or rotten. What causes this?

Pecans are a major crop in Georgia. In most years, Georgia produces more pecans than any other state in the U.S. This does not mean that pecans grow here without any problems. Many diseases and insects plague pecans. This is why pecan farmers have to spray their trees to prevent these pests.

Unfortunately, we home gardeners cannot spray our trees. The trees are too big and the chemicals are not readily available to us. For this reason, we must take the crops we get. Pests are often related to weather. In the wet season of 2003, we had a lot of disease which destroyed much of the crop. Perhaps in 2004 we will get a better crop of pecans.

There are some things we can do to help our trees. I have arranged these in decreasing order of importance. In my estimation, you need to do the first ones first and then progress down the list.

Soil sample and then add lime if needed. This allows the plant to make the best use of fertilizer we add to the soil.

At harvest, pick up the pecans as soon as they fall. Check the pecans every week or so and pick up those that fall. Do not wait until all the pecans fall to pick them up. When pecans are left on the ground or allowed to remain wet, they can rot or turn dark inside.

You can use a long bamboo pole to knock pecans out of the tree so you can pick them up at one time. Wear head and eye protection if you do this.

Pecans need water throughout the growing season, but especially during the last two weeks of August and the first two weeks of September. This is when the trees are filling the nuts. Water with one to three inches of water once a week. Let the soil dry before you water again.

Fertilize the trees in February with four pounds of 10-10-10 per inch of trunk diameter of the tree. The fertilizer needs to have zinc in it. Garden centers sell special pecan fertilizers. If the fertilizer does not contain zinc, you can add zinc sulfate along with the 10-10-10. Use one pound of zinc sulfate for trees less than four years old and two to five pounds per tree for older trees.

Contact the Extension Office for a flier on pecan tree care.

**Where can I find some good gardening information on the web?** The World Wide Web can be a great place or a terrible place to find information. Remember that there are no safeguards on the web. There is no one ‘watching the store’ to see if the information is reliable. The information on a site is only as good as the reputation of the site’s owner. Stick mainly to university sites when looking for gardening information.

Here are a few sites that may be helpful to you:

Search University publications from across the U.S. at [http://plantfacts.osu.edu/](http://plantfacts.ohio-state.edu/)

Get answers to common garden questions by going to the ***Georgia Center for Urban Agriculture*** site and looking under the ‘Homeowners’ section - [www.griffin.peachnet.edu/urbanag/](http://www.griffin.peachnet.edu/urbanag/)

Search through UGA publications at [www.ces.uga.edu/](http://www.ces.uga.edu/)