



SPECIALTY CROPS

WHAT ARE SPECIALTY CROPS?

Specialty crops are defined by the USDA Specialty Crops Block Grant program as “fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops (including floriculture).”

In Growing Georgia’s Fruit, Nut and Vegetable Literacy Specialty Crops program, we will focus on Georgia’s top specialty crops: blueberries, watermelon, bell peppers, sweet corn, cucumbers, cabbage, onions and pecans.

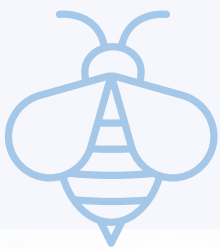
We also grow apples, cantaloupes, carrots, green beans, sweet potatoes, squash, leafy greens, lima beans, eggplant, grapes, muscadine grapes, peas, tomatoes and strawberries...just to name a few! Explore Georgia Farm Bureau Certified Farm Market website at GFB.AG/CFM to find a farm near you for locally grown products. Many of the farm are also agritourism sites and have hay rides, farm animals and special events. To find some easy and tested recipes, visit the Georgia Grown Test Kitchen section of Georgia Grown Feed My School at feedmyschool.org.

HONEYBEES

Honey.com

Did you know that 1/3 of the food Americans eat is directly or indirectly derived from honey bee pollination? Honeybees are important pollinators for Georgia’s specialty crops because they ensure the successful production of these crops- which has a Farm Gate Value of approximately \$1.5 billion. Honeybees have large colonies that can be moved to wherever they are needed, such as a watermen field or peach orchard. They can communicate direction and distance from the hive to the source of nectar which make them very efficient. Scouts communicate about the source of nectar through what is called the “bee dance.”

In addition to pollinating our fruit and vegetable crops, we also get honey from honey bees. A honey bee must gather nectar from 2 million flowers to make one pound of honey! You can help the honey bees by planting bee friendly flowers, such as Cosmos, Bee Balm, Blackeyes Susan’s, Sunflowers, Milkweed, Lantana and Asters. To learn more about honey bees visit honey.com.





BLUEBERRIES

GFVGA.ORG

WHERE DID THEY COME FROM?

Blueberries originated in North America.

WHEN ARE BLUEBERRIES PLANTED AND HARVESTED IN GEORGIA?

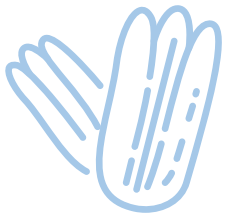
Blueberries grow on shrubs. The shrubs take about 3 years to produce juicy blueberries. In Georgia, we harvest blueberries from May through August.

WHY ARE BLUEBERRIES GOOD FOR YOU?

They contain a variety of vitamins and minerals and are a good source of Vitamin C and manganese. They are also a good source of dietary fiber.

TOP 5 COUNTIES BY VALUE

Bacon, Appling, Ware, Coffee, Clinch



PECANS

GeorgiaPecans.org

WHERE DID THEY COME FROM?

Pecans originated in North America.

WHEN ARE PECANS PLANTED AND HARVESTED IN GEORGIA?

Pecans grow on trees. The trees take about 6-10 years to produce their delicious nuts. In Georgia, we harvest pecans in the fall.

WHY ARE PECANS GOOD FOR YOU?

Pecans contain more than 19 vitamins and minerals. With little saturated fat and no trans-fat, pecans are heart-healthy. They are a good source of dietary fiber and protein.

TOP 5 COUNTIES BY VALUE

Mitchell, Dougherty, Peach, Lee, Macon



WATERMELONS

georgiawatermelonassociation.org

WHERE DID IT COME FROM?

Watermelon originated in Africa.

WHEN IS WATERMELON PLANTED AND HARVESTED IN GEORGIA?

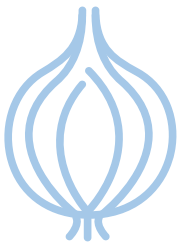
Watermelon is planted from March through May and harvested from June through September.

WHY IS WATERMELON GOOD FOR YOU?

Watermelon has excellent levels of Vitamins A and C and a good level of Vitamin B6. It is also 92% water and good for hydration.

TOP 5 COUNTIES BY VALUE

Crisp, Turner, Telfair, Tift, Colquitt



ONIONS

vidaliaonion.org

WHERE DID THEY COME FROM?

Onions originated in Asia.

WHEN ARE ONIONS HARVESTED IN GEORGIA?

Green onions are harvested from January through June. Vidalia® Onions are harvested from April through June.

WHAT ARE VIDALIA® ONIONS?

These sweet onions are grown only in the defined production area in Georgia where the soil and climate combine to produce the special characteristics of this onion. Under the terms of Federal Marketing Order No. 955, as well as a state law, Vidalia onions are defined to include only those produced in 13 counties (Emanuel, Candler, Treutlen, Bulloch, Wheeler, Montgomery, Evans, Tattnall, Toombs, Telfair, Jeff Davis, Appling and Bacon) and portions of seven others (Jenkins, Screven, Laurens, Dodge, Pierce, Wayne and Long).

Why are onions good for you? Onions are high in Vitamin C and dietary fiber.

TOP 5 COUNTIES BY VALUE

Tattnall, Toombs, Evans, Candler, Bulloch



SWEET CORN

georgiacorngrowers.com

WHERE DID IT COME FROM?

Corn originated in North America.

WHEN IS SWEET CORN PLANTED AND HARVESTED IN GEORGIA?

Sweet corn is planted from February through May for spring/summer harvest and from July through August for fall harvest.

WHY IS SWEET CORN GOOD FOR YOU?

Sweet corn contains a variety of vitamins and minerals and is a good source of dietary fiber.

TOP 5 COUNTIES BY VALUE

Decatur, Mitchell, Colquitt, Seminole, Worth



Zach & Ilana Richards
Levity Farms
Union County, GA
www.levityfarms.com





BELL PEPPERS

GFVGA.org

WHERE DID THEY COME FROM?

Bell peppers originated in Central and South America.

WHEN ARE BELL PEPPERS PLANTED AND HARVESTED IN GEORGIA?

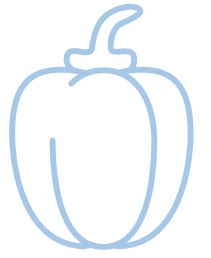
Bell peppers are planted in Georgia in late spring for summer harvest and late summer for fall harvest.

WHY ARE BELL PEPPERS GOOD FOR YOU?

They contain a variety of vitamins and minerals and are especially good sources of Vitamins C and A.

TOP 5 COUNTIES BY VALUE

Echols, Colquitt, Lowndes, Tift, Brooks



CUCUMBERS

GFVGA.org

WHERE DID THEY COME FROM?

Cucumbers originated in India.

WHEN ARE CUCUMBERS PLANTED AND HARVESTED IN GEORGIA?

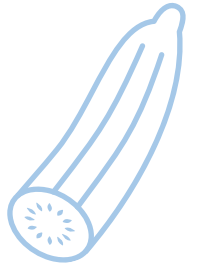
Cucumbers are planted in the spring and harvested from June through August.

WHY ARE CUCUMBERS GOOD FOR YOU?

Cucumbers are high in Vitamin K and a good source of potassium, but low in sodium.

TOP 5 COUNTIES BY VALUE

Brooks, Dodge, Echols, Colquitt, Telfair



CABBAGE

GFVGA.org

WHERE DID IT COME FROM?

Cabbage originated in the Mediterranean region of Europe.

WHEN IS CABBAGE PLANTED AND HARVESTED IN GEORGIA?

Cabbage is planted in late summer and harvested in late fall or early winter.

WHY IS CABBAGE GOOD FOR YOU?

Cabbage is full of vitamins and minerals. It is especially high in Vitamin C.

TOP 5 COUNTIES BY VALUE

Colquitt, Toombs, Lowndes, Worth, Rabun



PEACHES

GAPeaches.org

WHERE DID THEY COME FROM?

Peaches originated in China.

WHEN ARE PEACHES PLANTED AND HARVESTED IN GEORGIA?

Peaches grow on trees. The trees take about 2-4 years to produce juicy peaches. In Georgia, we harvest peaches from May until September.

WHY ARE PEACHES GOOD FOR YOU?

They contain a variety of vitamins and minerals, especially Vitamins A and C.

TOP 5 COUNTIES BY VALUE

Peach, Taylor, Macon, Crawford, Bleckley



CHOOSE THE ANSWER!

- Which is NOT considered a specialty crop?
A. fruits B. vegetables C. nursery crops D. pine trees
- How much of the food Americans eat directly depends on honey bee pollination?
A. 1/4 B. 1/3 C. 1/2 D. all of it
- Can Vidalia® Onions be grown anywhere in Georgia?
A. No B. Yes
- What do blueberries grow on?
A. trees B. vines C. shrubs D. individual plants
- How many years does it take for a peach tree to produce fruit?
A. 1 year B. 2-4 years C. 5 years D. 6-10 years
- When are bell peppers harvested in Georgia if they were planted in late spring?
A. winter B. spring C. fall D. summer
- What vitamin is cabbage especially high in?
A. Vitamin A B. Vitamin B C. Vitamin C D. Vitamin D
- Pecans are heart-healthy because they have very little _____.
A. minerals B. saturated fat C. fiber D. protein
- Dr. Juan Carlos is a professor of what?
A. Poultry Science B. Horticulture C. Entomology D. Ag Education
- What crop is not grown on the Pittman family farm?
A. watermelons B. cabbage C. blueberries D. onions

DR. JUAN CARLOS DIAZ-PEREZ

Professor, Horticulture | The University of Georgia College of Agricultural & Environmental Sciences

Areas of Interest: Vegetables, plasticulture, protected agricultural technologies

PLEASE EXPLAIN YOUR JOB?

My job is to serve Georgia agriculture by developing new knowledge to be more productive in the science of horticulture. I work on cultural practices for vegetable crops. My goal is to increase vegetable yield and quality and increase sustainability. My vegetable research interests include (a) Plasticulture/Protected Agriculture Technologies (plant responses to plastic film mulches, shade nets, and high tunnels) and Crop-Environmental Interactions; (b) Effect of Preharvest Factors on PostHarvest Quality; (c) Sustainable/Organic Vegetable Production (efficient use of fertilizers and water; utilization of cover crops and reduced tillage; reduced use of inputs).

WHO HELPS YOU WITH YOUR RESEARCH?

I have three technicians who work for me. Two of them have bachelor's degrees and one has an associate's degree. I also have one graduate student/teaching assistant. Teaching is also a component of my job.

DO YOU EVER CONTACT OTHER SCIENTISTS ABOUT THE WORK YOU DO?

I always work with other colleagues. Interdisciplinary work is a must to solve current agricultural challenges.

HOW CLOSELY DO YOU WORK WITH FARMERS?

Very close. Farmers "feed" us with knowledge and questions that help our research to be relevant.

WHAT IS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE WITH YOUR JOB?

Funding. An important part of my job is writing grants to secure funding for research.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE BEST ABOUT YOUR JOB?

Being connected with plants, life, nature. Plants connect you to life. It is different every day. The freedom to try new things in research is exciting. You talk to farmers and you can help them. It is very difficult to get bored – there is always a challenge. Working on agriculture (including horticulture), one of the oldest and relevant professions, is exciting because it involves working in a constantly changing field that demands the understanding of many sciences such as biology, physics, chemistry, mathematics, social sciences, economics, etc.

WHAT SUBJECTS IN SCHOOL HELPED YOU MOST IN YOUR JOB?

In addition to the sciences and mathematics, anything connected to language (reading and writing) were very important. I must be able to communicate what I do with others and it is critically important when I am writing grants for funding.



“
MY JOB IS
TO SERVE
GEORGIA
AGRICULTURE.”

PITTMAN FAMILY FARMS

The Pittman Family Farm includes Timmy Pittman (Dad), Patricia Pittman (Mom), Mitchell (interviewee), Becky (Mitchell's wife), Kyle (brother), Hope (Kyle's wife), and Jonathan (brother). Friends and other family members often help at the market as well.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN IN FARMING?

From the time I could walk, I was following my daddy and granddaddy on our farm, which included a large hog operation, peanuts, corn and winter wheat. We began growing vegetables in 1999. I graduated from The University of Georgia in 2008 with a degree in Agri-business. My brother Kyle graduated from Southeastern Technical College in 2008 with a degree in commercial and residential wiring. We both stayed active on the farm while in school, and both came back to the farm full-time in May of 2008. Our vegetable operation grew and we opened a produce store. When my youngest brother, Jonathan, graduated from UGA with a degree in marketing and finance, he came home to manage the store. It had a full line of vegetables but Jonathan added retro candy, glass bottle sodas, jams and jellies, hand-scooped ice cream and much more to give it an old country store vibe. The store became Pittman's Country Market. Now we are farming 400 acres of cabbage, 100 acres of watermelons, 15 acres of Vidalia onions, 225 acres of corn, 320 acres of peanuts, 385 acres of cotton, and about 75 acres of specialty crops for our store. We also have 45 head of cows, 15 sows and raise show pigs as well.

WHAT IS INVOLVED IN GROWING VEGETABLES?

The most important thing is making sure you have a reliable source to buy your product and a labor force to gather it. It takes more revenue up front to grow vegetables than conventional crops, so managing money is a must. Vegetables also require more water, fertilizer, and spray than conventional crops. Every vegetable must be planted, harvested and packed by hand; a reliable labor force is so important.

BIGGEST CHALLENGE AS A PRODUCER?

I would say it's paperwork, with food safety as the predominant factor. It constantly changes! We had about three notebooks for food safety in 2002, and now we have close to 20. We have always believed in producing safe, high quality food. All of the costs involved in the food safety process comes out of our pocket, and we do not receive a higher price for our product.

WHAT DO I LIKE THE MOST ABOUT FARMING?

I love the family atmosphere. I grew up working with my grandparents and parents, and now working with my wife, brothers and parents is very special to me. Being able to raise our kids on a farm and seeing them get excited about farming is heartwarming. I love to work and be productive with what God has blessed me with and called me to do.

WHAT SUBJECTS IN SCHOOL HAVE HELPED ME IN FARMING?

I would have to say math. Numbers are everywhere in farming from being able to work numbers from seed populations, measuring chemicals in spraying, and dealing in money from expenses and revenue and so many other ways.



“
I LOVE THE FAMILY
ATMOSPHERE.”