

# OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD, AND FORESTRY

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## **Plentiful pecans make tasty treats**

The annual pecan harvest is shaking up orchards across Oklahoma. Nuts are falling from Miami to Idabel as orchard owners shake their trees and fire up their pecan shelling equipment. The state ranked sixth in the nation for pecan production in 2014 with a harvest of 12 million pounds.

Pecans grow naturally across central and eastern Oklahoma. The nuts are favored by wildlife and people alike. Pecans provide nutritional benefits in addition to edible enjoyment. They add protein and fiber to our diets and are low in cholesterol and sodium. Pecans are often recommended as a source of healthy fat. In a nutshell, pecans are a treat with their buttery, rich flavor.

Gift shops at pecan orchards have lots of creative ways to enjoy these health benefits. Bags of pecan halves or pieces are available for holiday recipes. Pecan oil is another gourmet option for cooking with heart healthy flavor. Irresistible sweets include chocolate-covered pecans, praline pecans and other flavors like jalapeno and pumpkin spice. Pecan honey butter and pecan brittle also make great gift options.

“There are many pecan orchards to visit in Oklahoma,” said agritourism coordinator Meriruth Cohenour. “Each one has a different selection of products and some will shell and crack your own pecans for you.”

Examples of the diverse pecan products available include whole pecans in the shell, papershell or native pecan halves, pecan oil, and gift tins of flavored pecans. For those who love grilling or smoking meat, pecan firewood and pecan smoking chunks are perfect choices.

The Oklahoma agritourism website, [www.oklahomaagritourism.com](http://www.oklahomaagritourism.com), is an easy way to find a pecan orchard near you. An interactive map on the Specialty Crops page shows the locations of pecan orchards and links to their websites.

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Photo caption: Sugared pecans are ready for sale in a pecan orchard gift shop.

