



Georgia
Peanut
Commission

AG MAG

An agricultural magazine for kids from Georgia Ag in the Classroom and Georgia Peanut Commission. For more activities, visit gfb.ag/AITC and GaPeanuts.com.



PEANUTS

The peanut probably originated in Brazil or Peru, although no fossil records exist to prove this. People in South America made pottery in the shape of peanuts or decorated jars with peanuts as far back as 3,500 years ago. Peanuts were grown as far north as Mexico by the time the Spanish began their exploration of the new world. The explorers took peanuts back to Spain, where they are still grown today. From Spain, traders and explorers took peanuts to Africa and Asia. Africans were the first people to introduce peanuts to North America. Eventually, peanuts were planted throughout the Southern United States. Georgia produces almost half of all peanuts in the United States, making it the No.1 producing state in the nation!

“THE FATHER OF THE PEANUT INDUSTRY”

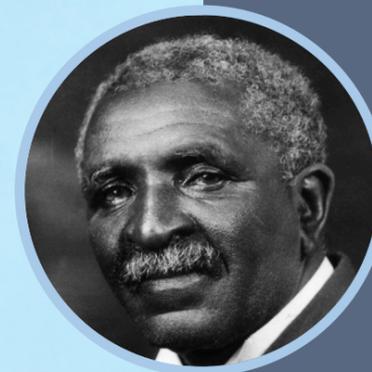
Records show that it wasn't until the early 1800s that peanuts were grown as a commercial crop in the United States. They were first grown in Virginia and used mainly for oil, food and as a cocoa substitute. At this time, peanuts were regarded as a food for livestock and the poor and were considered difficult to grow and harvest. In the early 1900s peanuts became a significant agricultural crop when the boll weevil threatened the South's cotton crop. Following the suggestions of noted scientist Dr. George Washington Carver, peanuts served as an effective commercial crop and, for a time, rivaled the position of cotton in the South.

Source: www.nationalpeanutboard.org

WHO WAS GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER?

George Washington Carver was born in Diamond, Missouri, in the 1860s. He was an American agricultural scientist and inventor. He actively promoted alternative crops to cotton and methods to prevent soil depletion. While a professor at Tuskegee Institute, Carver developed techniques to improve soils depleted by repeated plantings of cotton. He wanted poor farmers to grow alternative crops, such as peanuts and sweet potatoes, as a source of their own food and to improve their quality of life. The most popular of his 44 practical bulletins for farmers contained 105 food recipes using peanuts. Although he spent years developing and promoting numerous products made from peanuts, none became commercially successful.

You can visit the George Washington Carver Museum at Tuskegee Institute by visiting www.nps.gov/tuin/index.htm



THE PEANUT FARMER GOES TO WASHINGTON, D.C.

Jimmy Carter grew up in Plains, Georgia, where his father owned a peanut farm and a local store. Growing up he worked at his father's store and enjoyed listening to baseball games on the radio. He was a good student in school and also an excellent basketball player. After graduating from high school, Carter went to the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis. In 1946, he graduated and entered the Navy where he worked on submarines including the new nuclear powered submarines. Carter loved the Navy and had planned to spend his career there until his father died in 1953. He left the Navy to help with the family business. Carter worked on the farm and took care of the store until 1971. In 1971, he became the 76th governor of Georgia. In 1976, Carter won the presidential election becoming the 39th U.S. president. He is the first and only president from Georgia.

You can visit Carter's boyhood farm today in Plains, Georgia, at www.jimmycarter.info.



HOW DO PEANUTS GROW?

THE 4 STAGES:

- 1 Farmers Plant the Seeds**
In Georgia, peanuts are planted after the last frost in April through May, when soil temperatures reach 65°–70°F. Farmers typically plant specially grown peanut kernels from the previous year's crop about two inches deep, approximately one to two inches apart in rows. Georgia farmers typically plant over 650,000 acres of peanuts every year.
- 2 Seedlings Crack the Soil**
Peanut seedlings rise out of the soil about 10 days after planting. They grow into a green oval-leaved plant about 18 inches tall. Unlike most plants, the peanut plant flowers above the ground, but fruits below ground.
- 3 Flowers Appear**
Yellow flowers emerge around the lower portion of the plant about 40 days after planting. When the flowers pollinate themselves, the petals fall off as the peanut ovary begins to form.
- 4 "Pegging" is a Unique Feature**
This budding ovary is called a "peg." The peg enlarges and grows down and away from the plant forming a small stem which extends to the soil. The peanut embryo is in the tip of the peg, which penetrates the soil. The embryo turns horizontal to the soil surface and begins to mature taking the form of a peanut. The plant continues to grow and flower, eventually producing some 40 or more pods. From planting to harvesting, the growing cycle of a peanut takes four to five months, depending on the type and variety.



FROM THE FIELD TO MARKET

FARMERS HARVEST ABOUT 145 DAYS AFTER PLANTING. The peanut harvesting starts in September and continues through October in Georgia. The farmer waits until the soil is not too wet or too dry before digging. When conditions are right, he or she drives a digger up and down the green rows of peanut plants. The digger pulls up the plant, gently shakes off any lingering soil, rotates the plant and lays it back down in a "windrow" —with peanuts up and leaves down. The peanuts will stay in the field for 2-3 days to cure, or dry. Peanuts contain 25 to 50 percent moisture when first dug and are dried to 10 percent or less so they can be stored. After drying in the field, a combine separates the peanuts from the vines, placing the peanuts into a hopper on the top of the machine and depositing the vines back in the field. Peanut vines can be left in the field to nourish the soil or be used as nutritious livestock feed. Freshly combined peanuts are then placed into peanut wagons for further curing with forced warm air circulating through the wagon.

THE PEANUT'S FIRST STOP IS A BUYING POINT. Most farmers do not have the time during harvest to continue cleaning and drying their crops. So growers rely on a Peanut Buying Point to receive, weigh, clean, dry, inspect, grade and prepare the peanuts for storage and shelling.

BETWEEN 80 AND 90 PERCENT OF ALL PEANUTS GO TO A SHELLING PROCESSOR. In some areas, a sheller can be the peanut crop's first stop. After cleaning, drying, inspecting and grading, the peanuts either go to commercial use or are accepted for storage. From the sheller, peanuts can go to a food manufacturer, a peanut processor, a crushing facility in the U.S. or the shelled peanuts can be exported to another country.

ABOUT 5 TO 10 PERCENT OF ALL PEANUTS GO TO SEED COMPANIES. After processing, these peanuts become next year's seed.

ROASTING PROCESSOR. These peanuts stay inside the shell and are roasted. The flavors can be original, spicy or sweet. The possibilities are limitless! Roasted peanuts are most commonly known as "ballpark" peanuts and show up at sporting events and in stores. Some are exported.

PEANUT PROCESSOR. It's common for raw peanuts to be delivered to a company that processes the peanuts. These companies set up contracts with various peanut butter companies, confectioners or snack companies, and prepare the peanuts for the food company to use for their products. Peanuts are sorted according to variety, uniformity of size or flavor, and prepared and sold to food manufacturers. These manufacturers make the peanuts into some of our favorite American foods—peanut butter, peanut candies or snacks.

FOOD MANUFACTURER. Sometimes peanuts are sent to a food manufacturer that has its own peanut processing capabilities. The peanuts are then turned into peanut butter, peanut candy, peanut snacks and other peanut products.

CRUSHING FACILITY. Raw peanuts are crushed to produce peanut oil or peanut flour. Some peanut oil is sold as is, and some is added to other oils to produce vegetable oil. Crushing facilities also produce peanut meal, which is usually sold for livestock feed.

Source: www.nationalpeanutboard.org





TYPES OF PEANUTS

Runner Peanuts

Uniform in kernel size (which allows for even roasting), the runner peanut is most commonly used for making peanut butter. It is typically grown in the states of Georgia, Texas, Alabama, Florida, South Carolina and Oklahoma; and accounts for 80 percent of the peanuts grown in the United States.



Virginia Peanuts

The largest of all peanuts, the Virginia peanut is also known as the “ballpark” peanut and is often used in gourmet snacks. Virginia peanuts account for about 15 percent of total U. S. production and are grown mainly in southeastern Virginia, northeastern North Carolina, South Carolina and West Texas. Virginia peanuts are also used for all-natural peanut butter.



Spanish Peanuts

Known for its red skins, the Spanish peanut has smaller sized kernels and is used predominantly for peanut candy, salted peanuts and peanut butter. Its reputation of having the “nuttiest” flavor when roasted is due to its higher oil content. Spanish peanuts are typically grown in the states of Oklahoma and Texas and account for four percent of U.S. production.



Valencia Peanuts

Having three or more kernels per shell, the Valencia has a sweet flavor and is commonly used for all-natural peanut butter. Also, they are excellent for use as boiled peanuts. Valencia peanuts are grown mainly in New Mexico and account for less than one percent of U.S. production.

DID YOU KNOW?

1. It takes about 540 peanuts to make a 12-ounce jar of peanut butter.
2. The average Georgia peanut farm is 200 acres.
3. The average person will eat almost 3,000 PB&Js in their lifetime, according to a 2016 survey by Peter Pan Simply Ground Peanut Butter.
4. There are enough peanuts in one acre to make 35,000 peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. (Source: USDA NASS data)
5. Peanut butter was first introduced at the St. Louis World’s Fair in 1904.
6. The peanut is Georgia’s official state crop.



PEANUT BUTTER RECIPE

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups roasted peanuts
- 2 teaspoons peanut oil
- Pinch of salt

DIRECTIONS

1. Combine the peanuts, salt and the peanut oil in a food processor; blend until smooth.
2. Store unused portions in refrigerator.

CHOOSE THE ANSWER!

1. What state grows the most peanuts?
a. Florida; b. Georgia; c. Alabama; d. New Mexico
2. George Washington Carver is known as the father of what industry?
a. Cotton; b. Watermelon; c. Peanut; d. Sweet Potatoes
3. Who was a peanut farmer from Georgia and President of the USA?
a. Jimmy Carter; b. Abraham Lincoln; c. George Washington; d. John F. Kennedy
4. How many acres of peanuts are planted in Georgia?
a. less than 225,000; b. 250,000-350,000; c. 400,000-500,000; d. more than 600,000
5. The ___ enlarges and grows down and away from the plant forming a small stem which extends to the soil.
a. flower; b. peg; c. stem; d. leaf
6. How many days do peanuts grow before being harvested?
a. 75; b. 215; c. 145; d. 95
7. What peanut accounts for 80 percent of the peanuts grown in the United States?
a. Runner; b. Valencia; c. Spanish; d. Virginia
8. It takes about ___ peanuts to make a 12-ounce jar of peanut butter.
a. 300; b. 250; c. 480; d. 540
9. What subject did Jan Jones study in college?
a. Math; b. Reading; c. English Literature; d. Social Studies
10. What course taught Chris about all types of finances and how they can affect a farm or business?
a. Banking; b. Agrifinance; c. Ag. Business; d. Accounting

JAN JONES

Farmer/Owner | Jan Jones Farms | Climax, GA

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN IN PEANUT PRODUCTION?

I am a fifth generation farmer and I've lived on a peanut farm my whole life, but I've only been a "real" farmer since 2013. My family has been on this land for almost 100 years and we have been farming on this land decades. My love of peanuts started early! One of my first childhood memories of peanuts is selling boiled peanuts at Jones Country Meats in Climax. My family owns a small meat packing company there and my two younger sisters and I would sell boiled peanuts every summer.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR FARM.

My farm is in Decatur County and it is a pretty typical row crop operation for Southwest Georgia. I grow cotton, corn, and peanuts, and I also raise beef cows. I learned so much about farming from helping my Dad, Jerry, on his 1,000-acre farm. While I was working for my Dad I saved my money so I could rent 150 acres and have my own acreage to take care of. There's never enough time in a day to get everything done on our farms! I help my Dad on his farm, and he helps me on my farm.

WHAT IS INVOLVED IN GROWING PEANUTS?

Peanut farming is a little different from other types of row crop farming because unlike cotton and corn, peanuts grow underneath the ground. Because of a peanut crop's growing environment, peanut farmers have to watch their peanuts really closely for signs of disease, mold and fungus.

Peanut harvest is a little more difficult than other crops' harvests too. Before the peanuts are ready to leave my fields, I have to dig them all up and run them through a peanut combine. Around 130 days after their plant date, peanuts are dug and flipped up on top of the ground. I'll leave them that way for around three days, so the vines will dry out and be easier for the combine to pick. Once the vines are dry enough, it's time for the peanut combine! At this stage, the combine will pick up and separate the dried vines from the peanuts. All of the peanuts will then be loaded onto semitrailers and sold.

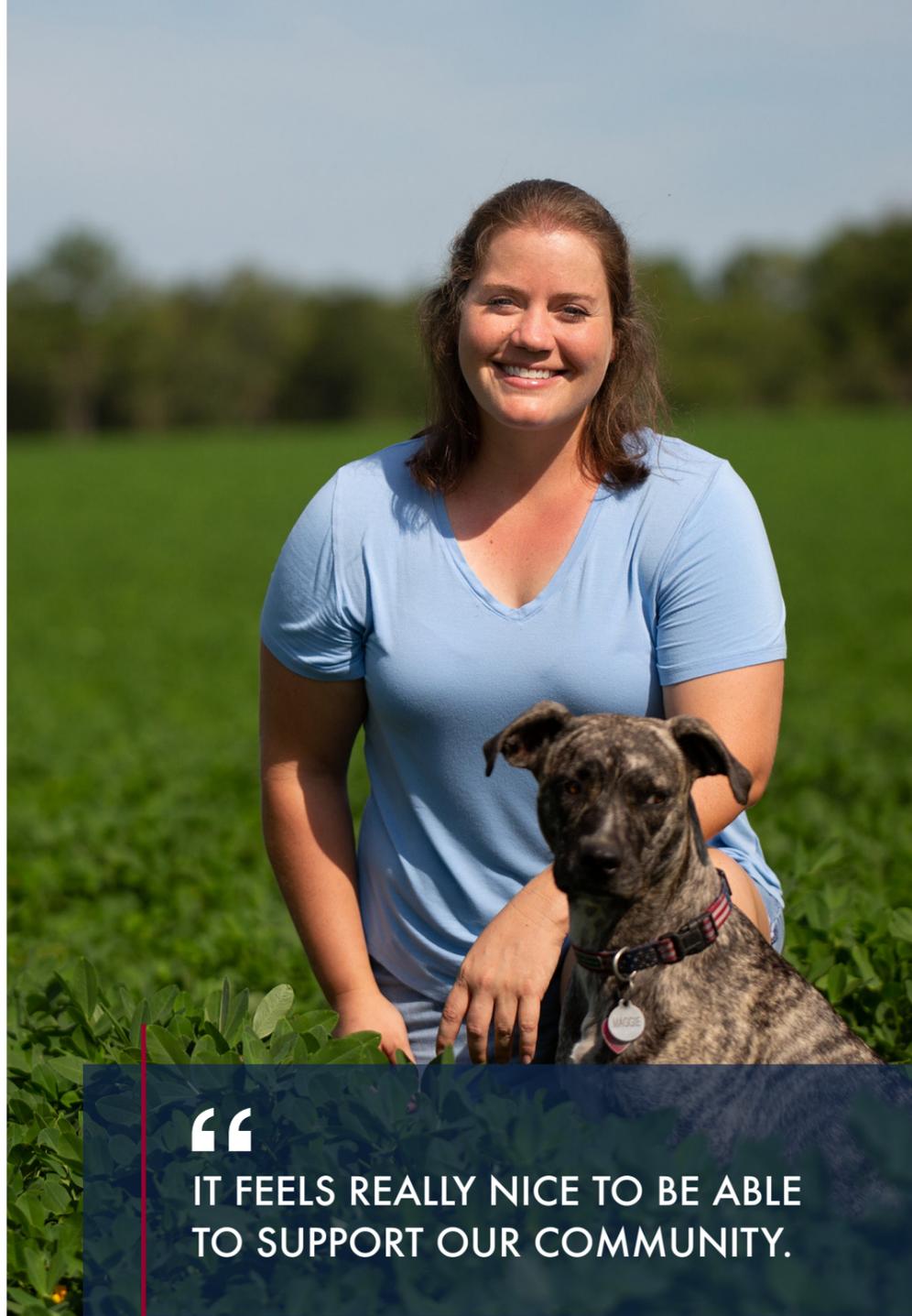
WHAT SUBJECTS IN SCHOOL HAVE HELPED YOU THE MOST AS A PRODUCER?

I studied English literature in college, and while my degree isn't as common among farmers as a science or business degree, it's more useful than some might think! A big part of studying English is paying attention to details no matter how small, researching and finding solutions to problems, and knowing how to clearly communicate those problems with other people.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE BEST ABOUT BEING A FARMER?

I love being a farmer because I get to work with my dad, I'm not sitting inside an office all day, and every day is "bring your dog to work day." I also like being such a big part of our community. It feels really nice to be able to support our community. In my small town we don't have a lot of industry going on. There's agriculture and that's about it and to be able to provide jobs for an otherwise underserved area is pretty awesome.

To learn more about Jan, watch a video at www.gapeanuts.com.



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IT FEELS REALLY NICE TO BE ABLE TO SUPPORT OUR COMMUNITY.

CHRIS CUNNINGHAM

Vice President | R. L. Cunningham & Sons | Quitman, GA

HOW LONG HAS YOUR FAMILY BEEN IN THE PEANUT BUSINESS?

My Great-Grandfather, Robert L. Cunningham, Sr., began custom shelling peanut seed in 1942. In 1961, he partnered with his sons, Walter and Lawrence (R.L. Cunningham, Jr.) to incorporate R.L. Cunningham & Sons, Inc. peanut buying point and seed sheller. In 1978, my father Larry (R.L. Cunningham, III) joined the business and continued to grow the operation. I joined in 2007 after graduating from the University of Georgia (UGA).

PLEASE EXPLAIN YOUR JOB.

We perform various tasks throughout the year. From January to March we shell peanuts for peanut seed. Immediately following our shelling season we treat and bag peanut seed to sell to peanut growers across south Georgia and north Florida. Our summer months are spent bailing out commercial warehouses and maintaining harvest equipment. Once peanut harvest arrives, we are a fully operational buying point that receives, dries, grades, and stores farmerstock peanuts. Since we have our own seed program, we segregate commercial peanuts and seed peanuts. After harvest, we start our shelling process again.

WHAT IS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE WITH YOUR JOB?

Peanut harvest is challenging because weather affects everything. The peanuts have to be dug (inverted), and wait about 3 days before picking. When they are delivered, they have to be dried down below 10.4% moisture in order to be graded. Drying can be a long process and harvest/drying equipment can be difficult to manage efficiently. Also, improper drying can hurt the quality of the peanuts and ultimately lower their value to the producer.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE BEST ABOUT YOUR JOB?

I love interacting with people. This job allows me to interact with farmers, brokers, other buying point managers, shellers, manufacturers, and consumers. It's a great industry to be a part of.

WHAT SUBJECTS IN SCHOOL HAVE HELPED YOU IN YOUR JOB?

While attending UGA, I remember taking a Selling in Agriculture class which taught me a lot about business relationships and business methods. Agrifinance was another great course which combined all types of finances and how they can affect your farm or business.

To learn more about R. L. Cunningham & Sons, visit www.cunninghampeanuts.com or watch a video about Chris at www.gapeanuts.com.

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