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, watermelons, 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 farms 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 have 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**

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 June 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, Clinch, Appling, Lanier, Coffee

**PECANS**

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, Lee, Peach, Macon

**WATERMELONS**

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, Tift, Turner, Dooly, Wilcox

**ONIONS**

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, Wayne, Candler

**SWEET CORN**

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, Tift, Miller
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, Lowndes, Colquitt, Brooks, Tift

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, Colquitt, Echols, Dodge, Tift

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, Tift, Echols, Rabun

PEACHES
GPeaches.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
Macon, Crawford, Peach, Taylor, Meriwether

1. Which is NOT considered a specialty crop?
   A. fruits  B. vegetables  C. nursery crops  D. pine trees
2. 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
3. Can Vidalia® Onions be grown anywhere in Georgia?
   A. No  B. Yes
4. What do blueberries grow on?
   A. trees  B. vines  C. shrubs  D. individual plants
5. 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
6. When are bell peppers harvested in Georgia if they were planted in late spring?
   A. winter  B. spring  C. fall  D. summer
7. What vitamin is cabbage especially high in?
   A. Vitamin A  B. Vitamin B  C. Vitamin C  D. Vitamin D
8. Pecans are heart-healthy because they have very little
   A. minerals  B. saturated fat  C. fiber  D. protein
9. Dr. Juan Carlos is a professor of what?
   A. Poultry Science  B. Horticulture  C. Entomology  D. Ag Education
10. What crop is not grown on the Pittman family farm?
    A. watermelons  B. cabbage  C. blueberries  D. onions

CHOOSE THE ANSWER!
I LOVE THE FAMILY ATMOSPHERE.

THE PITTMAN FAMILY FARM

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 Pittman’s Country Market. Now we are farming 400 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 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.

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

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 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 YOU MOST IN YOUR JOB?

Areas of Interest: Vegetables, plasticulture, protected agricultural technologies

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 YOU LIKE BEST ABOUT YOUR JOB?

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 HELPED YOU MOST IN YOUR JOB?

Areas of Interest: Vegetables, plasticulture, protected agricultural technologies

Teaching is also a component of my job.

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

I would have to say math. Numbers are everywhere in farming from being able to work and be productive with what God has blessed me with and called me to do.

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