

Peanut Farming in Texas

As we approach Kildare, TX, you may be able to spot vast farm fields from your windows. It is likely that much of the acreage in view is dedicated to growing peanuts. This little nut has become very important to the state. Texas is the second leading peanut producing state in the country and the industry is worth approximately \$1 billion to the Texas economy, with over 300,000 acres of land cultivated for peanuts each year. Texas produces close to 460,000 tons of peanuts annually; that's the same weight as 11,500 eighteen wheeler trucks.

Peanuts were not always the powerhouse crop that they are today. Prior to the 1900s, many people regarded peanuts as food for the poor. It was not until the Civil War when the peanut became a common source of nutrients for soldiers, and the nuts began to gain a better reputation. As the peanut's popularity was rising, George Washington Carver, of the Tuskegee Institute, invented more than 300 uses for peanuts, from recipes to industrial products. His breakthroughs led the way for peanuts to become a cash crop.

Did you know that there are actually four different kinds of peanuts? They are the Runner, Virginia, Spanish, and Valencia. The Runner Peanut is now the most cultivated peanut in Texas and the United States, making up more than two thirds of peanut production. The Virginia peanut has the largest kernel, which makes it the most popular peanut to roast, sell in the shell, and eat as a snack. Spanish peanuts are smaller than the other peanuts and are mostly used in candies. The sweetest peanut is the Valencia, which is typically roasted and sold in the shell. Are you craving some peanuts, yet?

Americans are said to eat about 6 pounds of peanuts per person per year. If you make an effort to maintain a healthy diet, this is the "health nut" for you! Peanuts are a healthy source of protein and 29 other essential nutrients. And more, peanuts have zero cholesterol, are low in saturated fat, and linked to good heart health. The Texas Peanut Producers Board is dedicated to making Texans healthier and is actively striving to promote the consumption of peanuts as a part of people's everyday diets.

The peanut industry, especially in Texas, has come along way over the past century. Producers of the crop boast a taste as big as Texas! So next time you're making a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, I hope you discover a new appreciation for this once unappreciated, but now famous crop.

Source(s):

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