

NEWS RELEASE

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Black Walnuts: Love or Hate

It is time to gather the black walnuts. The nuts are separating from the tree and dropping. This is easier than climbing the tree but I recommend wearing a hard hat. If you don't care to bend over to gather, they make a roller that will pick them up.

My tree is loaded with nuts. I plan to remove this tree since it is too close to the house. The tree somehow knew my plan and is trying to persevere by making lots of seed. Walnuts produce a substance in their roots that can inhibit growth of a few plants. This is another reason for my removal.

Black walnuts are ready to be harvested when the hull can be dented with your thumb. It is important to hull walnuts soon after harvest. If not removed, the hull will leach a stain through the nut and into the meat. The stain will not only discolor the meats but also give them an off flavor.

There are several ways to hull walnuts including running them through a corn sheller or pounding each nut through a hole in a board. The hole must be big enough for the nut but smaller than the hull. An easier way is to run over the nuts with a lawn tractor. This will break the hull but not crack the nut.

Walnut hulls contain a dye that will stain concrete, your hands, clothes or about anything else it touches. Wear gloves as the stain is almost impossible to remove.

Wash hulled nuts by spreading them out on the lawn or on a wire mesh and spraying them with water or placing them in a tub of water. If you place them in a tub, the good nuts should sink. Those that float are probably not well-filled with kernels.

Next, dry the nuts by spreading them in layers no more than three deep in a cool, shady and dry place such as a garage or tool shed. Drying normally takes two weeks. The dry nuts then can be cracked and used as time allows.

The black walnut is a common tree along the streams and on rich, upland soil in eastern Kansas. Uses for the wood include furniture, wall panels, gunstocks and cabinets. It is a good tree when growing in the right location.

You can find out more information on this and other horticulture topics by going to the Riley County, K-State Research and Extension website at www.riley.ksu.edu. Gregg may be contacted by calling 785-537-6350 or stopping by 110 Courthouse Plaza in Manhattan or e-mail: geyeston@ksu.edu.