

Nut growing in Ohio  
Paul Hagen  
Holgate Oh  
[paulhagen1@hotmail.com](mailto:paulhagen1@hotmail.com)

Why grow nuts? Taste

Perennial and long producing (all your life)

**Species:**

Black Walnut - easy to grow and common native

Butternut, - native but rare, sticky leaves and nuts

Persian/ Carpathian- hardy version of English walnut found in stores- names are interchanged, not native

Hickory -shagbark, shellbark, - common in Ohio

Pecan- hard to get crops in Ohio

Filberts/hazelnut

Chestnut- Chinese and hybrids Not discussed here

You may get Black or Carpathian nuts in 5-7 years.

Hickories take longer, slow growing.

Pawpaw- not a nut but people fit in well with the other nuts that grow trees.

**Getting nuts:**

Go foraging in woods; ask old timers and they will tell you where trees are; especially good hickories and butternuts. Keep track of what you pick up and go back to good producers and crackers year after year. Yards are easiest and people are glad to get rid of nuts or they will pick them up for you.

*So you want to grow nut trees?*

**Varieties:**

Use grafted varieties and save yourself a lot of time and energy. Just like you do not grow apples from seed, you should use grafted nut trees.

Buy grafted trees from Nolin River or others close to our climate. Use varieties known to produce in your area or Ohio. \$30 ea.

Or start a new hobby and graft your own.

My recommended varieties:

Carpathian= **Hansen** (the best over all others) good as a single tree and produces every year, disease resistant 2.Lake, 3. Mckinster

Black= Sparrow, Elmer Myers, Stambaugh

Butternut=Craxesy, Kenworthy is very large

Hickory=shagbark= Yoder

Filbert = Mealer

See a list from ONGA

*If you must be a nut and grow them from seed:*

Use nuts from good trees or grafted trees. Do not allow them to dry. Stratify the nuts by over wintering in drained containers with soil or sand; or in refrigerator.

Protect from squirrels. I bury mine in the dead compost pile in onion bags.

Plant nuts in spring before they sprout and mark where you plant and protect from squirrels. Plant like a squirrel only a little deeper. 2 inches. If planting sprouted nuts, don't break off taproot.

Go to Ohio Nutgrowers Meetings and start to learn how to graft. In 3-5 years attempt to graft.

When you fail or forget; hopefully you picked a genetically good seed.

### **Planting location-**

Full sun, but blacks can tolerate shade.

Blacks and butternuts are messy and not good yard trees. They also release juglone, which will kill tomatoes, peppers and lots of other plants and shrubs. Keep root zone of mature tree away from plants you like. Look online for list.

My trees are in front yard, back yard, next to driveway (falling nuts can break windshields) and with lilacs which should have not survived.

**Soils-** Blacks like bottom ground and do not like “wet feet” Need to be well drained. But my trees grow well on black clay of the old Black Swamp. They do not like hard, infertile, clay. Hickories will grow about anywhere.

Hickories are very slow growing. Blacks, butter, and carpathian are rather fast.

Look in your area where the native trees are. Blacks and butternut will be near streams.

Shagbark hickory on high ground. Shellbark on low ground.

Avoid frost pockets especially for carpathian and pecan. It will kill the blossoms.

Grafted trees -plant as instructed.

Many of these will grow a large taproot, even the first year. It will not want to hit hard clay.

Mulch & keep weeds away 3-4 ft.; water for a few years; prune

**Graft** at 1.5 -2 inch diameter

**Protection-** Deer - use fence , such as old cattle fence made into large (7 ft diameter ) circles .

Rabbit – fence, tree shelters

Mowers, weed wackers , keep away

Weeds- keep 3 ft diameter around tree free of weeds; use Roundup? Hoe? Not just mowing

Disease – varieties, spray, or do nothing

Insects- Hickory Horned Devil, Cecropia worm(entertaining). Webworm

Shuckworms for Carpathian and hickory cause problems.; pick up nuts in fall and discard/burn.

**Harvest-** beat the squirrels

Don't let blacks get mushy because juice turns meat bitter.

Carpathian- Pick up nuts each day ; shuck and place in mesh bag to dry, secure from squirrels and mice. Air dry for several weeks.

Black walnuts- shuck immediately when husk is green. Recipe for shucking:

Old corn sheller or car tire or stomp with foot. Wear rubber gloves and remove husk, put in 5 gal bucket with water and use a ½in drill and paint stirrer. Rinse several times in egg basket. Air dry in mesh bags for 1-2 months.

Butternut- shuck and dry as blacks or dry in husk and peel husk before cracking

Hickory- shuck and dry; discard any with holes or shuck sticks to it.- bad nuts.

Filberts- shuck and dry

## **Cracking**

Place nut end to end

Makes a mess, protect your eyes. . Crack a bunch and place in pans to pick out with nut picks while relaxing. Don't let nuts set long after cracking or they dry out.

Keep records of good trees to pick up from for next year

Eat & Taste;

look through and remove any shell fragments.

Put in jars and freeze.

**Crackers** – hammer & stone (old school)

I have the tool for you! Hunt nutcracker, Master nutcracker. Pickup brochures or check online \$60-80 and well worth it!

**Eat** as raw, roasted, sugar coated, baked

## **Markets**

Local, organic, sustainable product.

Whole nuts, cracked and pieces, roasted, sugared, used in baked goods, toppings for ice cream.

Your own idea???

Sell for squirrel food to townies

Commercial buyers-

Kurt Belser - starting a commercial processor for buying native nuts in Ohio

Information sources:

Old timers ---- people, ask around

Libraries

Internet

Seed books

Nut growers organizations- I have brochures:

Ohio Nut Growers Assn.

[www.onga.org/](http://www.onga.org/)

Northern Nut Growers Assn.

[www.nutgrowing.org](http://www.nutgrowing.org)

Books: Nut Tree Culture in North America by Northern Nut Growers Assn. (out of print, try library)

**New from Northern nutgrowers: A Guide to Nut Tree Culture in North America, Vol.1  
\$50 for members.**