



University of California
Cooperative Extension
Tulare County

Agriculture and Natural Resources



Prepared by: _____

HARVESTING AND STORING ALMONDS

Many people have almond trees in their yard. Almonds are a good source of protein, vitamin E, fiber, and several minerals. Almonds are low in saturated fat and have less fat than many nuts. Here is some information to help you enjoy your almonds:

When to Harvest:

Depending upon variety, almonds are ready for harvest from early August to late September. Harvest should begin when about 95 percent of the nuts have hulls that have split open to expose the in-shell almond inside. Hull split begins in the top of the tree and progresses downward. To prevent birds such as scrub jays from stealing your crop and insects such as the navel orangeworm from infesting the nuts, harvest as soon as most (75 percent or more) of the hulls have split open. It is also important to keep your tree well watered up to the time of harvest, since the hulls will not split well if the tree is water stressed.

Harvesting:

The best way to knock almonds from trees is to strike the small branches with a pole or to strike the major branches with a rubber mallet made for that purpose. It is a good idea to spread a tarp beneath the tree to help catch the falling nuts. Pick nuts up promptly to prevent ants from invading and damaging kernels.

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Hulling and Drying:

After harvest, remove hulls promptly from the nuts; in the home orchard, hull removal is best done by hand. Almonds harvested at the proper time usually require additional drying to prevent mold growth in storage. To dry the nuts, spread them in a thin layer on a tray or screen and place outdoors to allow good air circulation. Stir often. Birds commonly steal almonds while they are drying; you may need to cover the drying nuts with screen or plastic netting to prevent loss. If rain threatens, cover the nuts or move them to a covered patio.

Check the nuts often for dryness. Remove shells from several nuts and break the kernels. Rubbery kernels indicate that additional drying is necessary. Almonds are ready for storage when their kernels are crisp to brittle when broken.

Storage

When properly dried, in-shell almonds can be stored for 8 months at room temperature (68°F), and for a year or more at 32° to 45°F. Shelled almonds will retain quality for 1 year at 32°F and for a year or more at 0°F. Before storing almonds at room temperature, you can freeze them to kill storage pests such as navel orangeworm. Freezing the nuts at 0°F for 48 hours kills insect pests and eggs. You can also use dry ice (frozen carbon dioxide) to destroy insect pests in almonds prior to storage. For information on how to treat almonds with dry ice, see UC Cooperative Extension Publication 7184, Dry Ice: Easy Fumigation for Navel Orangeworm Control in Stored Almond Meats. Almond kernels can absorb objectionable odors in storage. Take care to store them in airtight containers away from strong-smelling items such as onions or garlic.

Source: Harvesting and Storing Your Home Orchard's Nut Crop: Almonds, Walnuts, Pecans, Pistachios, and Chestnuts, UC Cooperative Extension Publication 8005.

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