

Ridge Walnuts Bring Home Blue Ribbons

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NEW PARIS (Bedford Co.) — This year, George Dickum brought home six blue ribbons and eight other places from the Pennsylvania State Farm Show. They were all for his outstanding edible nuts.

The ribbons were added to the pile he has already won at both state and national levels.

Dickum's interest in horticulture goes back many years. He was reading a magazine article when he first learned about the Carpathian walnut. "My forefathers came from the Carpathian Mountains in Czechoslovakia. I knew that was a cold weather country and it surprised me. I spoke to my mother about it, then, just tucked the information in my head for later use."

Years later, he was strolling through the Herman Furry orchard near New Enterprise and became interested in Furry's method of grafting walnut trees to black walnut. "Right after that, I wanted to

try it myself," he remembers.

Then a steelworker in Johnstown, Dickum planted a few trees near his home in Geistown. When the family moved a few years later, he took his orchard along.

"My greatest desire was to live in Bedford County," Dickum remembers. "I always loved this area. And, I knew that if apples would grow in Chestnut Ridge, so would nut trees. They require the same type of soil."

Seventeen years ago, he bought a small 12-acre farm just outside of Schellsburg, and planted as many nut trees as he could afford.

Now a leading member of the Northern Nutgrowers Association, George has won prizes in both state and national competition. National competition is held in Nebraska and he has taken both first and second places there.

This May, he plans to travel to New Zealand to a nut growers symposium. "I would like to learn how I could earn international recognition," Dickum explains.

He says he has been disappoint-

ed that Pennsylvania State University has not paid more attention to the need for nut trees in the north.

"They are an old and valuable food source," explains the outgoing and knowledgeable Dickum. "And, English walnuts have only good cholesterol. They are a good meat substitute."

He says Nebraska is now leading the nation in the study of nut trees. "Last year I returned from a trip to find a botanist from Nebraska wanting to see some of my trees," Dickum says.

Dickum explains the importance of developing food growing areas in the north. "Irrigation such as they are doing in northern California can only last so long, when they eventually hit salt water, it will all end. The cold weather fruits and vegetables that can be grown in the north will be a valuable source of food. And, nuts will be included."

English walnuts grown in the cold weather areas of the country are larger and sweeter than those normally shipped from California. "Candy makers love them," he explains. "They can get the whole walnut out of the shell to dip in chocolate."

The Dickum farm now includes a tree nursery where George has a number of cloned varieties of nut trees. Included are his English walnut grafted to black walnut; buart nut which is a cross between a butternut and heart nut; a pecan grafted to hickory (they are both in the same family), and his giant sized Napier filbert, named in honor of Napier Township.

Last year, George and his two sons who live in the area picked 1,500 pounds of various types of nut. There are about 30 pounds of nuts to the bushel.

Nuts sell for \$1.50 to \$2 per pound. "It's a lucrative business," George points out. "If you would plant yourself a nice grove of nut trees at age 40, the trees would be keeping you by the time you reached 65."

While Dickum has a few fruit trees intermingled in his orchard, he prefers the nut trees. "One reason is that I don't have to worry about bee pollination," he says. "Nut trees are all wind pollinated."

Cold weather is not as detrimental to the nut trees and frost in the spring does not seem to harm them.

Grafting does require 85-degree temperatures lasting for at least 30 days. "However, we find we can cover the graft area with plastic and the summer sun will maintain the temperature we need even if the air temperature lets us down," he explains.

Like all plant species, the nut trees and filbert nut bushes do have enemies. The husk fly can lay eggs in the shell causing them to rot. Therefore, the Dickums find it necessary to spray.

The peskiest pests, however, are the squirrels and deer. Deer attack only the chestnut trees, but squirrels will eat any kind of nuts.

"They think they found heaven when they get in here," Dickum grins.

To combat the fuzzy tailed tree rats, he uses both traps and Jack Russell Terrier dogs. Jack Russells were originally bred to kill fox and will attack a squirrel with equal ferocity.

The Dickums use the nuts in many forms of cooking including cookies and they add crushed walnuts to their hamburg for a real taste treat.



George Dickum with a "best of show" award from the Pennsylvania State Farm Show for his edible nuts.

Nuts from the Dickum orchards are also marketed all across the county. "Mostly by word of mouth," he explains. "Someone gets them, gives a few away, and before long I'm getting more orders."

A wide variety of handmade nutcrackers provides ready samples for browsing customers. He is presently working on a belt-driven model of a nutcracker which he hopes to be able to offer to local farmers with black walnut trees on their land. "The worst part about those is the cracking," he says.

Another source of nut income for George is the trees themselves. "About March," he explains, "As soon as you can get a shovel in the ground, people will be stopping to buy trees."

Always willing to lend a hand, he has helped two area farmers, Cliff Zimmerman and Charlie Betsch, start their own small nut orchards.

"I learned a lot from other people and I am always willing to share my knowledge," says Dickum.

Dairy Farmers Join Basketball Network

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — Penn State Basketball has moved into big league action and Pennsylvania dairy farmers have continued their sponsorship of the team's network. The Penn State Radio Network is one of the strongest collegiate networks in the country, bringing live Big Ten basketball to fans throughout Pennsylvania.

Dairy farmers, through the Pennsylvania Dairy Promotion Program, are targeting fans with messages about dairy products. Basketball and dairy products make a great team. Athletes of all ages depend on nutritious dairy foods to help them become strong and agile.

On the Network, fans are encouraged to use dairy products to maintain their "edge." One message explains "Why Milk Really Scores with Basketball,"

with reminders that milk builds strong bones and great muscle tone. Fans are told "the next time someone passes you a cold glass of milk, give it a shot!"

Real Pennsylvania cheese is also a focus of dairy farmers' messages. Farmers offer fans a tasteful cheese "basketball" line-up that includes: "Monterey Jack Nachos," "Parmesan Popcorn," and "Swiss Cheese Fondue." All of these delicious cheese snacks provide plenty of nutrition to fans and athletes.

Pennsylvania dairy farmers have been sponsors of the Penn State Network for over seven years. The Pennsylvania Dairy Promotion Program is a non-profit, dairy farmer funded generic promotion organization. The Program works on behalf of dairy farmers to share product and industry information with the public.



George points to the location of the graft of an English walnut onto a black walnut tree.



George Dickum in a nursery of nut trees.



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