PEANUTS IN A NUTSHELL

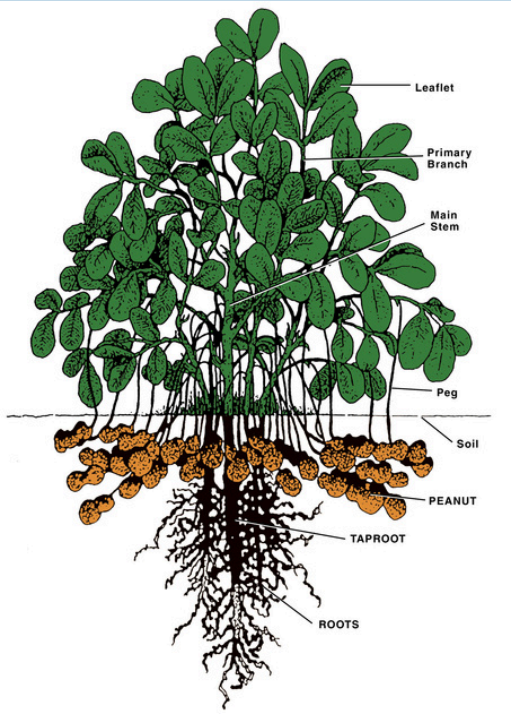


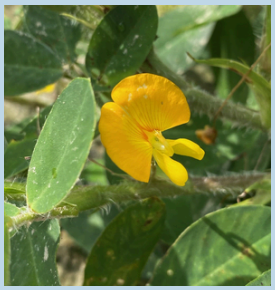
Diagram of a peanut plant

THE PEANUT PLANT

Peanuts are not a nut; they are a legume! Legumes have nodules on their roots that contain nitrogen-fixing bacteria that allow the plant to add nitrogen back to the soil.

Peanuts flower aboveground, but fruit belowground! The plant produces a yellow flower, and a special structure called a “peg” extends from the flower into the soil. Peanuts form on the end of the peg. This makes peanuts very unique!

Peanuts are self-pollinating and each plant produces about 40 mature peanut pods.



Peanut flower

Peanut pegs

Root nodules

TYPES OF PEANUTS

VIRGINIA

-Served as in-shell “ballpark” style peanuts or gourmet cocktail peanuts typically found in a can.

-Grown primarily in the V-C Region (Virginia, Norh Carolina, and South Carolina) and some in Texas.

-Largest in size, crunchy texture.

RUNNER

-Predominantly used in peanut butter, and also used in candies and other peanut snacks.

-Grown primarily in the Southeastern U.S. where over 75% of the U.S. peanut crop is produced.

-Uniformity in size and taste allows for uniform end products.

SPANISH

-Used in candies, snacks, and some in peanut butter.

-Grown primarily in Oklahoma and Texas

-Very small with reddish brown skins, higher oil content than other types.

VALENCIA

-Used as specialty in shell peanuts or boiled, many are organic.

-Grown primarily New Mexico.

-Sweet flavor, 3 or more kernels per pod with bright red skins.

PLANTING AND HARVEST

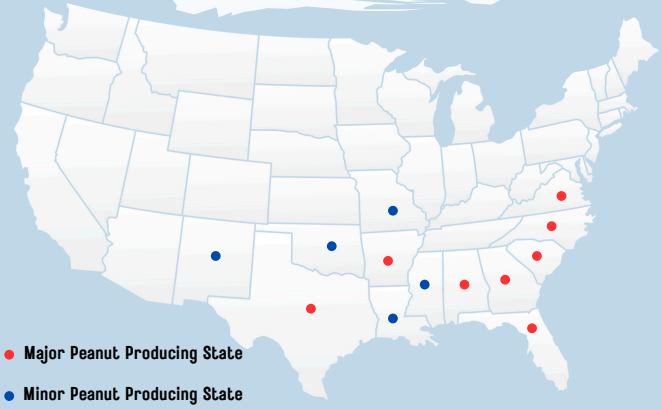
Peanuts are typically planted after the threat of frost has passed when soils are around 65-70 degrees. Peanuts are loaded into hoppers on the planter and planted about two inches deep, every 3-4 inches. Virginia-type peanuts grow best in sandy soils.

Peanuts typically mature 125-150 days after planting. The mesocarp (inner layer of the peanut hull) will begin to darken and eventually turn black as the peanut matures. This is determined through a process called pod blasting where the outer layer of the hull is removed with water to reveal the mesocarp.

When peanuts are mature and ready to be harvested, growers will use peanut diggers to gently raise the plant out of the ground and flip it over. Peanuts are typically left for four or more days in the field to dry down.

After peanuts and peanut plants are dry, a peanut combine is used to lift the plants and separate the peanut from the vines. The peanuts are blown into the hopper of the combine and the vines and other plant material are deposited back onto the ground. Vines can be used for animal feed or left to add more nutrients back to the soil. Peanuts are then loaded into a special peanut wagon and dumped into a drying trailer before being taken to a buying point for inspection and grading.

THE U.S. PEANUT BELT



Virginia Peanuts

First and Still Finest

"VIRGINIA PEANUTS"

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