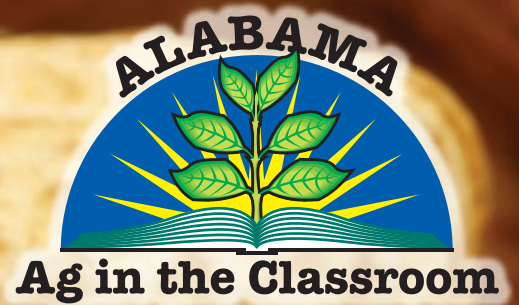


Alabama Ag Mag Peanuts



Producing Peanuts

Peanuts are unusual because they flower above ground but fruit below ground. Peanuts are legumes, which means they are plants with simple dry fruit.

Their growing cycle takes about four to five months, depending on the type of peanut.



Did you know?

About half of the peanuts grown in the United States are grown within a 100-mile radius of Dothan, Alabama!

Types of Peanuts

1. Runner Peanuts

Runner peanuts are the most common type of peanut in the nation and in Alabama. Runners have high yields and attractive, uniform kernel size. Fifty-four percent of the runners grown are used for peanut butter. Runners are grown mainly in Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Texas and Oklahoma.

2. Virginia Peanuts

Virginia peanuts have the largest kernels and are most commonly roasted or processed in the shell. When shelled, the larger kernels are sold as snack peanuts. Virginia peanuts are grown mainly in southeastern Virginia and northeastern North Carolina.

3. Spanish Peanuts

Spanish peanuts have smaller kernels covered with a reddish-brown skin and are usually used in peanut candies, snack nuts and peanut butter. Spanish peanuts have a higher oil content than other peanut varieties, making them preferred for cooking oils. They are primarily grown in Oklahoma and Texas.

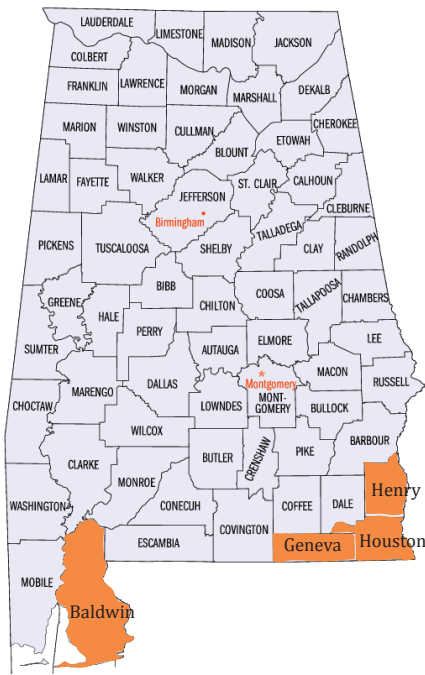
4. Valencia Peanuts

Valencia peanuts usually have three or more small kernels to a pod and are covered in a bright-red skin. They are sweet peanuts and are usually roasted and sold in the shell. They are excellent for fresh use as boiled peanuts and are primarily grown in New Mexico.

Where Peanuts Grow

Peanuts grow best where the ground is warm. They are grown mostly in China, India, the United States, Nigeria, Burma, Indonesia and Argentina.

In the United States, the top 10 peanut producing states are Georgia, Texas, Alabama, Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, Mississippi, Virginia, Oklahoma and New Mexico.



The top peanut producing counties in Alabama are Houston, Baldwin, Henry and Geneva.



National Peanut Festival

The city of Dothan in Houston County is the self-proclaimed “Peanut Capital of the World.” During fall harvest, Dothan hosts the National Peanut Festival, which draws around 120,000 visitors to southeastern Alabama.

The National Peanut Festival is the largest peanut festival in the nation. It is now a 10-day event that features carnival rides, livestock shows, agricultural displays, live music, arts and crafts, pageants, food and, of course, plenty of peanuts. The dates vary between late October and early November.

Did you know?

The first National Peanut Festival was held in 1940!



From The Peanut Gallery

Americans consume 700 million pounds, or 3.3 pounds per person, of peanut butter per year. That’s enough to coat the bottom of the Grand Canyon!

Peanuts are also called goobers, goober peas, pindars, ground nuts, earth nuts, monkey nuts and grass nuts.

Peanuts are not only eaten, but their shells are used as well. Peanut shells may be used in cat litter, wallboard, fireplace logs, paper, animal feed and sometimes as fuel for power plants.

Two peanut farmers have been elected president of the United States: Thomas Jefferson and Jimmy Carter.

One acre of peanuts will make 30,000 peanut butter sandwiches!

Peanuts are planted with special machinery. Seeds are planted about two inches deep, with one seed placed every two inches. The seeds grow best in warm soil. Peanuts require 120 to 160 frost-free days for a good crop. In about two weeks, the first green leaflets will unfold above the soil.



Peanut Seed



Young Peanut Plant



Full Grown Peanut Plant

Harvesting Peanuts

1. A digger with a four-to-six inch horizontal blade is driven down the rows. This loosens the plants from the soil. A shaker lifts the plant from the soil, gently shakes the dirt from the peanuts, rotates and lays the plant “peanuts up.” This exposes the peanut pods to sunlight so they can dry out.
2. Once the pods dry out for a few days, a combine or thresher cuts the pods from the vines, places the pods in a hopper on top of the machine and replaces the vines and stems on the ground. The harvested pods are then placed in drying trailers to cure.



Did you know?
Alabama produces
an average of more
than 400 million
pounds of peanuts
per year!

Peanut Products

Peanut Butter

About one-half of all edible peanuts produced in the United States are used to make peanut butter and peanut spreads.

How is it made? The shelled, raw peanuts are roasted and cooled, then the skins are removed (blanched). The peanuts are ground, usually through two grinding stages, to produce a smooth, even-textured butter. The peanuts are heated during the grinding to about 170 F. Once the emulsifier (hardened vegetable oil which prevents the peanut oil from separating and rising to the top) is added, the butter is cooled rapidly to 120 F. This traps the peanut oil. To make chunky peanut butter, peanut granules are added to the creamy peanut butter.

Roasted Peanuts/Snack Peanuts

To be roasted in the shell, peanuts are cooked at medium heat for about 15 minutes. They may be plain or seasoned. The most popular seasoning is salted in the shell; however Cajun and jalapeño are becoming popular as well. To season peanuts in the shell, the peanuts are washed and the seasonings are forced through the shells by a pressure process. When dried during roasting, the seasonings remain inside the shells.

Peanut Confections

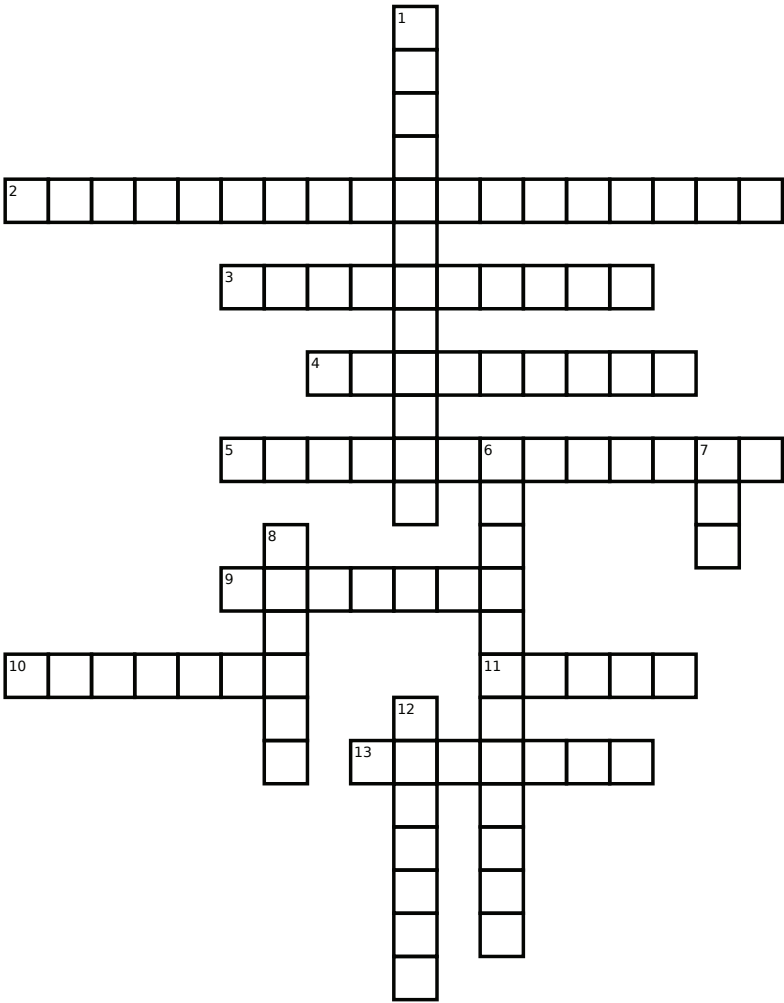
Peanuts are used in candy-making in a lot of ways. A large variety of candy bars combine peanuts (whole, chopped or as butter) with such treats as chocolate, nougat, marshmallow, caramel, other nuts and dried fruit. Peanut brittle and chocolate covered peanuts are the most popular. Six of the top 10 candy bars sold in the U.S. contain peanuts and/or peanut butter.

Oil

Applying pressure to peanuts squeezes out oil. This oil is excellent for cooking because it is tasteless and can be heated to very high temperatures. With hotter cooking temperatures, food will cook faster and absorb less oil.



Peanut Crossword



Crossword courtesy Education.com/worksheet generator

Down:

- 1. Machine that digs up peanuts.
- 6. The most common peanut product.
- 7. Number of inches peanut seeds are planted.
- 8. The peanut capital of the world.
- 12. The top peanut producing state.

Across:

- 2. Number of pounds of peanuts produced in Alabama in a year.
- 3. Hardened vegetable oil which prevents the peanut oil from separating and rising to the top.
- 4. A peanut product excellent for cooking because it is tasteless.
- 5. Most common type of peanut.
- 9. The top producing county in Alabama.
- 10. The type of peanuts that are used in peanut candies.
- 11. Alabama's ranking in peanut production.
- 13. Plants with simple, dry fruit.

Did you know?

It takes 540 peanuts to make a 12-ounce jar of peanut butter.

