

# Fall means time for filberts

While it may not feel like it this year, fall is right around the corner. The official start of fall comes with the equinox on Sept. 22, but nature is telling us it's on the way.

Geese are honking as they fly overhead, the leaves are turning color and the nights are getting cooler. Of course, many folks favorite fall tradition, college football, just started again too.

Go Beavers!

Along with the brisk nights and beautiful colors, one of my favorite fall festivities is the harvest of hazelnuts – also called filberts.

Enjoying the filbert harvest is not a new phenomenon. Hazelnuts are an ancient food source and have been utilized by people for thousands of years.

The European Filbert (*Corylus avellana*), which we grow commercially today, has been found in ancient writings dating back over 4,000 years ago. Charred filbert shells have been found in ancient campfires that could be as old as 10,000 years in northern Europe.

The etymology of the name “filbert” is contested. It is most likely derived from the German term “Vollbart” which means “full beard,” referring to some hazelnut varieties which have husks that cover the whole nut.

There is some speculation as to if the word filbert is an homage to St. Philibert of Jumièges, an abbot who has a feast named after him that is celebrated on Aug. 20, when hazelnuts traditionally ripened in England. Either way, the terms hazelnut and filbert are both popular, and interchangeable in today's world.

Oregon has native hazelnuts, but they aren't what we grow commercially. The first planting of European hazelnuts in Oregon was when it was still a territory in 1858, near Scottsburg.

In the early 1900s, a farmer named George Dorris established the first production orchard of hazelnuts in the



**Logan Bennett**  
*Extension Specialist*

state in Springfield. Dorris used a variety prized for their size and shape, the Barcelona hazelnut. This orchard started with 50 trees.

The orchard is still in production today but has grown to over 9,000 trees.

While we aren't the biggest producer of filberts in the world (falling behind Turkey and Italy), Oregon is renowned for the quality of the nuts we produce. With an industry that's over 100 years old, we know a thing or two about growing hazelnuts.

There are over 1,300 farmers producing hazelnuts in Oregon, and in 2020 the state produced 63,000 tons of filberts, valued at \$132 million. In terms of state commodities, it ranks 10th for agricultural products in Oregon. Every year, more hazelnuts are planted in Oregon.

Filberts have a natural inclination to be a bush, not a tree. Farmers and gardeners who grow them must spend considerable time training them into trees that are easier to manage and will produce better nuts. When trained properly, filbert trees will produce nice clusters of nuts that fall to the ground in autumn and are easy to harvest.

This requires yearly upkeep, as filberts will produce shoots every year at the bottom of the stump. Growers also need to prune their trees. Pruning hazelnuts is sometimes called dehorning and is common to prevent trees from getting too tall, too bushy and promoting larger nuts and clusters.

Hazelnuts also require care for diseases and pests. The most common filbert disease in Oregon is Eastern Filbert Blight. A fungal pathogen, EFB lives in a two-year life cycle.

Often, filberts will be



COURTESY OF LOGAN BENNETT

## A developing hazelnut cluster.

asymptomatic when first infected. When the disease is in its second year, branches will suddenly die during the summer, often with the leaves still attached. Over time, the tree will die.

There are treatments and schedules for treating EFB, and more recently, Oregon State University has developed hazelnut varieties that are resistant to the pathogen.

Filberts also deal with insect pests. Big bud mite, brown marmorated stinkbug and the most economically significant, filbertworm. Closely related to the apple infesting codling moth, filbertworms

lay eggs on or near developing nuts around July. The newly hatched larvae then burrow into the nut and feed on the kernel for 2-4 weeks, eventually burrowing out of the nut once the kernel is gone.

This is one reason you may have blanks or empty shells when you harvest hazelnuts. Key timings of insecticides and strategically placed pheromone traps are essential in combating this pest.

Flights and mating periods for filbertworm are weather dependent, and monitoring degree days is critical to making sure your harvest is worm-free.

Overall, Oregon produces

great hazelnuts and they can be a profitable crop for farmers and an enjoyable one for gardeners and hobbyists. If you are getting ready for your filbert harvest this year, good luck and have fun.

If you are interested in growing hazelnuts, but need information on where to start, reach out to me.

---

*Logan Bennett is the Small Farms Program Outreach Coordinator at the Oregon State University Extension. He can be contacted at [logan.bennett@oregonstate.edu](mailto:logan.bennett@oregonstate.edu) and 541-236-3015.*