

# Hazelnut yields fall short of expectations in Oregon

USDA had predicted record 2018 crop

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**  
Capital Press

Oregon hazelnut growers were anticipating a record-high crop in 2018, though it appears the harvest is coming in short of expectations.

The USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service predicted 52,000 tons of hazelnuts in August, which would have beaten the previous record of 49,500 tons in 2001. Instead, local processors say they are looking at between 46,000 to 48,000 tons, which is higher than last year's total of 32,000 tons but still not on par with increases in handling capacity.

Larry George, president and CEO of George Packing Company in Newberg, said he does not know exactly why hazelnut yields did not meet record forecasts. He said it looks like one of the primary new nut varieties, named Jefferson, did not perform as well as previously thought when the orchards were planted in 2007.

"I think the new varieties, for whatever reason,



Eric Mortenson/Capital Press

**Though the USDA predicted a record hazelnut crop in 2018, yields are coming in short of expectations, according to Oregon processors.**

we just overestimated what their production would be," George said.

George said it is also possible growers harvested fewer early season orchards due to low prices caused by economic turmoil overseas, including Chinese tariffs and currency devaluation in Turkey, the world's leading producer of hazelnuts.

"We'll know in a few weeks," he said.

Whatever the reason, a less-than-expected hazelnut crop does not bode well for processors such as George

Packing Company, which has invested millions of dollars to increase capacity. Hazelnut acreage has roughly doubled in Oregon over the past decade, up to 72,353 acres, spurred by new varieties such as Jefferson, Yamhill and McDonald that are resistant to Eastern Filbert Blight.

With the growth in acreage, George said there was a rush to expand alongside the orchards. Nearly all U.S. commercial hazelnuts are grown in Oregon, and George Packing Company is

the industry's largest processor and marketer.

But the volume simply has not arrived yet, George said, creating an overcapacity on production lines.

"You have this massive excess capacity and no huge volume to run," he said. "We were excited about a record crop. We're not the only ones who made significant investments, but it just never materialized."

Patrick Gabrish, vice president of sales and marketing for Hazelnut Growers of Oregon, a member-owned

co-op representing 150 local hazelnut farmers, said he is not overly concerned about lower yields. He is quick to point out that 33,000 acres of orchards still have not reached nut-bearing age. When they do, he said the spike in volume may help to stabilize prices and develop new markets.

"There's going to be plenty of crop to work with over the next few years," Gabrish said.

Both Gabrish and George raved about this year's crop quality, aided by a dry harvest season that minimized mud and mold. Months of drought, however, also emphasized the need for growers to adopt irrigation and nutrient programs to maximize yields through difficult summers.

Nik Wiman, orchard specialist for Oregon State University, said growers with dryland hazelnut orchards should consider adding drip irrigation if they can. Meanwhile, the university continues to research nutrient requirements for new trees, as well as how best to defend against emerging pests and diseases, such as bacterial blight and the Pacific flat-headed borer.

"Everything we have is based on the old (nut) culti-

vars," Wiman said. "We've been doing everything we can to update the nutrient requirements for the new trees."

This year was already challenging for the hazelnut industry as a perfect storm of global factors combined to drive down prices for growers. First, China slapped a 15 percent and 25 percent retaliatory tariffs on the product from the U.S. in response to the Trump administration's escalating trade war. Then, the Turkish lira plummeted in value, allowing the country to flood the market with cheap hazelnuts.

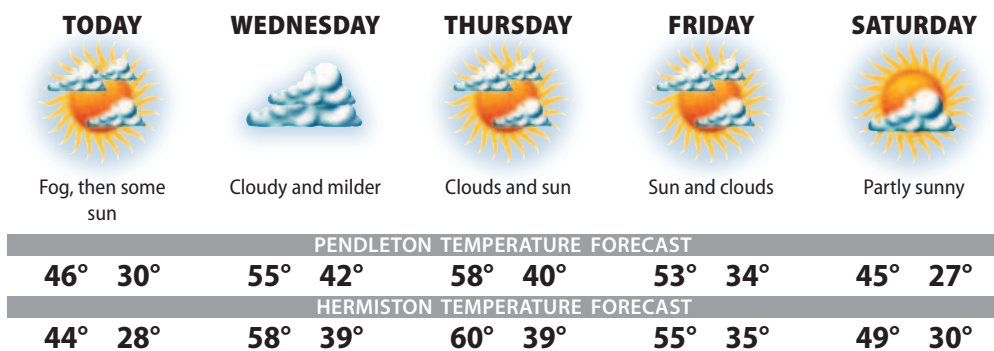
For the first time, growers accepted a three-tier price system at 62 cents per pound for in-shell hazelnut varieties, and between 81 and 91 cents per pound for "shell-out" varieties, which command more value for larger kernels.

That is lower than last year's price of 96.5 cents per pound for all hazelnuts, and \$1.18 per pound in 2016.

Terry Ross, executive director of the Hazelnut Growers Bargaining Association, said they system was meant to encourage growers to plant more shell-out varieties to tap into newer and potentially more lucrative markets.

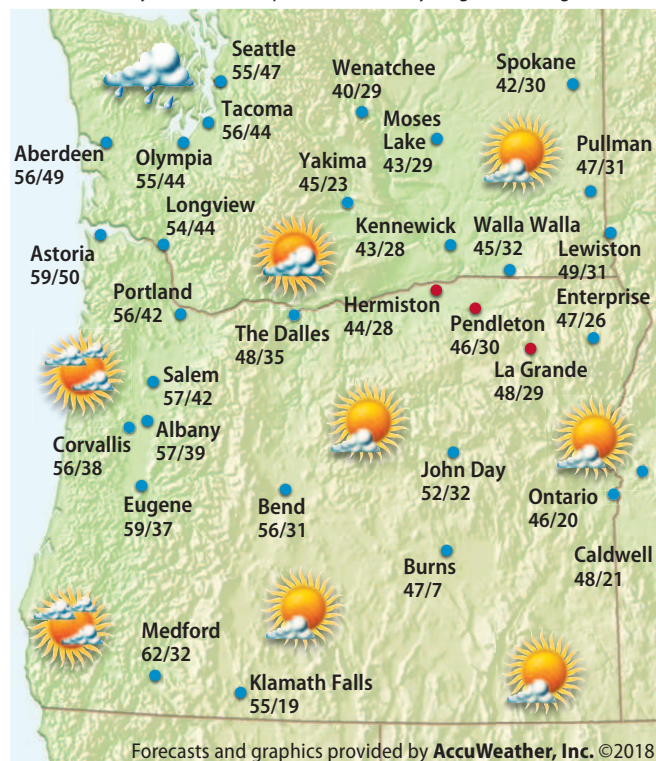
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## OREGON FORECAST

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.



## ALMANAC

PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	28°	25°
Normals	51°	34°
Records	80° (1999)	7° (1955)

PRECIPITATION

24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"
Month to date	0.10"
Normal month to date	0.50"
Year to date	8.25"
Last year to date	14.12"
Normal year to date	10.49"

HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	35°	31°
Normals	52°	34°
Records	74° (1999)	8° (2014)

PRECIPITATION

24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"
Month to date	0.01"
Normal month to date	0.45"
Year to date	6.46"
Last year to date	8.12"
Normal year to date	7.73"

WINDS (in mph)

	Today	Wed.
Boardman	ENE 3-6	WSW 6-12
Pendleton	N 4-8	WSW 6-12

## SUN AND MOON

Sunrise today	6:52 a.m.
Sunset tonight	4:27 p.m.
Moonrise today	12:09 p.m.
Moonset today	9:35 p.m.

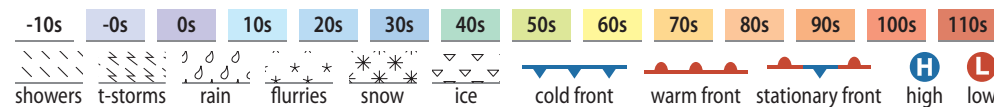
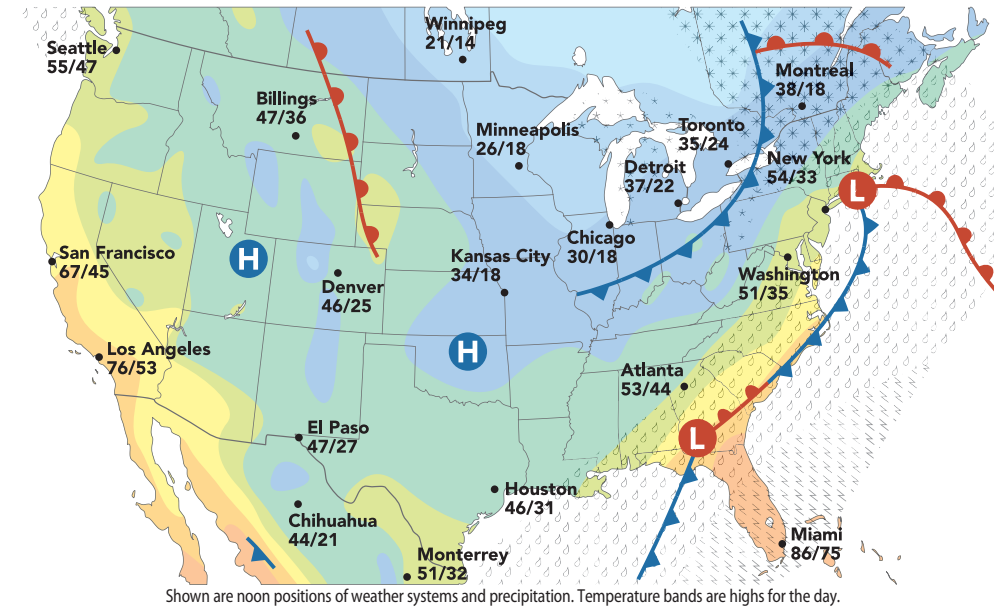


## NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)

High 90° in Immokalee, Fla. Low -18° in West Yellowstone, Mont.

## NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



## BRIEFLY

### Sen. Andy Billig of Spokane is new Senate majority leader

OLYMPIA, Wash. (AP) — Senate Democrats in Washington state on Monday elected Sen. Andy Billig of Spokane to be their new leader.

Billig takes over immediately, replacing Sen. Sharon Nelson, who announced earlier this year she wasn't seeking re-election to her seat.

"I am humbled to lead this diverse and talented group of senators," Billig said in a written statement. "This caucus recognizes that bipartisanship and viewpoints from every corner of Washington are crucial in moving our state forward."

He takes over a majority that has already increased its numbers to a 27-22 margin following last week's election. Two other races for Republican-held seats are currently in recount territory.

Billig, who was first elected to the state House in 2011, has served in the Senate since 2013. He's the only Democrat in the Senate from eastern Washington.

Nelson, a former banker and environmental activist, was first elected to the Senate in 2010 after serving in the House for three years. She became leader of the Senate Democratic

caucus five years ago, and became majority leader after Democrats regained a one-seat majority following the 2017 election.

Nelson said that she is "leaving the Senate in good hands with a majority leader who will truly put people first."

### State issues new opioid guidelines aimed at curbing abuse

EUGENE (AP) — The Oregon Health Authority has released new guidelines for prescribing opioids to patients with short-term acute pain.

The *Register-Guard* reports that it's part of a larger strategy to curb opioid abuse.

The guidelines include advising doctors not to consider opioids for mild to moderate pain in patients who haven't had past exposure to opioids. Doctors should also check on the patient's history of substance abuse problems, educate them about safe storage and disposal and prescribe the lowest effective dose.

State Health Officer Dr. Katrina Hedberg says most people who end up using opioids in the long term are those who started with a prescription to treat mild to moderate acute pain, such as a broken arm.

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