

The pistachio tree is native to western Asia and Asia Minor, from Syria to the Caucasus and Afghanistan. Archaeological evidence in Turkey indicates the nuts were being used for food as early as 7,000 B.C. The pistachio was introduced to Italy from Syria early in the first century A.D.

Subsequently its cultivation spread to other Mediterranean countries. The tree was first introduced into the United States in 1854 by Charles Mason, who distributed seed for experimental plantings in California, Texas and some southern states.

In 1875 a few small pistachio trees, imported from France were planted in Sonoma, Calif. In the early 1900's the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture assembled a collection of Pistachio species and pistachio nut varieties at the Plant Introduction Station in Chico, Calif. Commercial production of pistachio nuts began in the late 1970's and rapidly expanded to a major operation in the San Joaquin Valley.

Other major pistachio producing areas are Iran and Turkey and to a lesser extent, Syria, India, Greece, Pakistan and elsewhere.