

Chestnut Tree

The Pennsylvania Chapter of
The American Chestnut Foundation



Volume 8 Number 1

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February 2003

Join us for the Spring Meeting at Hershey, PA!

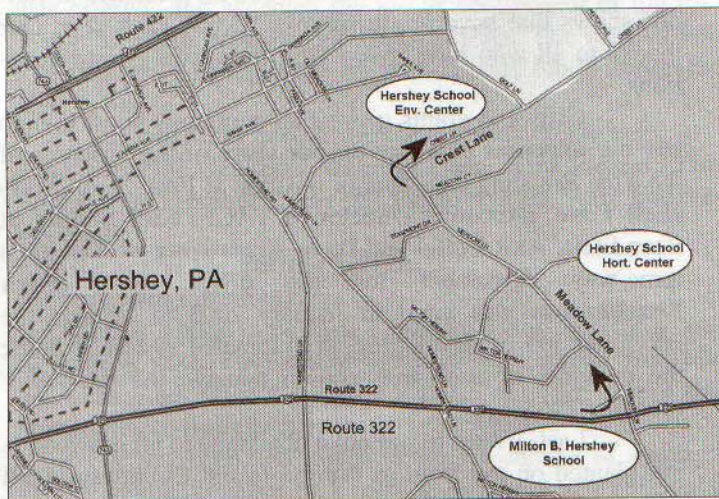
Saturday, March 22, the Pennsylvania Chapter will hold an annual Grower's and County Coordinator's meeting. All members, growers, county coordinators and guests are enthusiastically invited.

The meeting will take place at the **Milton Hershey Environmental Center starting at 9:00 a.m.** There will be a full day of presentations and workshops geared toward planting and growing chestnut trees and the development of county coordinators throughout Pennsylvania.

Scheduled presentations are: 1) **Dr Bob Leffel**, Chapter Scientist will review the requirements of the PA Breeding Program. 2). **Sara Fern Fitzsimmons** Tree Breeding Coordinator, and **Tim Phelps**, PSU Forest Technologist will introduce new information regarding the new automated orchard management data. 3). An open discussion about Chapter plans to develop an effective County Coordinator program by **Dave Armstrong**, and 4). **Ann Leffel** provides a chestnut breeding program update and conducts an open forum of grower and member idea sharing.

The workshops will focus on orchard growers receiving seed and supplies, planting procedures, inoculations, grafting techniques, and orchard data automation.

Lunch will be provided at a nominal fee of \$5 and an optional Dutch-treat dinner is planned to complete the day.



Hershey Environmental Center directions: From Route 322, North on **Meadow Lane**. Go one half mile to **Crest Lane** and Right to the Barn.

Moving The Chapter Office

By: Dave Armstrong, Operations Coordinator

The Pennsylvania Chapter's office will undergo two major changes over the next two years. Our office at York, Pa was closed and temporarily relocated to my home in Hanover.

The temporary address is:

PA-TACF
691 Pumping Station Road
Hanover, PA 17331-8608
Phone: 717-632-8669
E-mail: operations@patacf.org
Web site: www.patacf.org

This first relocation step was necessary in order to reduce office costs and travel time. I estimate we will save \$2,600 this year in rent, phone and other expenses.

The second office change will occur in early 2004 when we open a permanent Pennsylvania Chestnut Operations Center in the State College area. This was recommended in our Chapter's Five Year Strategic Plan. The State College area was selected because it is more centralized and will be the focus for the future breeding program at PSU and PA-DCNR. The American Chestnut Foundation also plans to open a TACF Northern Regional Office at PSU in the near future.

Notes from the 2003 Farm Show

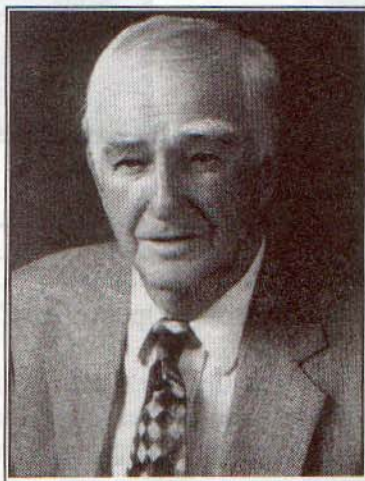
A very successful week of PA Farm Show

It was a long, cold farm show this year. The temperatures stayed below freezing and the show lasted eight rather than the usual five days. But, the great news was we had lots of professional volunteer help with thirty-two members working the booth and many visitors.

Chapter members **Gary and Cindy Blevins** added a nice touch with their Shaker box display, sales and demonstrations. Thanks to chestnut crafted items from **Chris Ditlow** and the Blevins, we received over \$1,100 in income. The winner of the American chestnut corner cupboard raffle was **Chandis and Violet Klinger!**

This Issue:	Hardwood Assn Presentation	Pg 6
Memorial to H.A. "Barney" Barnhart	National Tree Trust Grant	Pg 6
Notes from the PA-TACF President	Chestnut Tree Locations	Pg 6
Hiring a Tree Breeding Coordinator	County Coordinator Program	Pg 7
Evaluating Tree Inoculations	Craft of Shaker Boxes	Pg 7
Breeding Program Update	Notes from West Salem, WI	Pg 8

In Memory: H.A. "Barney" Barnhart



Harold "Barney" Barnhart passed away on October 14, 2002 at his home in Roaring Spring, PA, after an extended illness. He was a long time member of TACF, and he was instrumental in the reorganization of the Pennsylvania Chapter in 1994. Barney had a great passion for the mission of the Foundation -- to restore the American chestnut tree to our forestlands through the development of trees resistant to the chestnut blight. His enthusiasm for this mission was matched by his passion for the beauty of the wood. He had a gift of revealing that beauty in unique ways through his artistry with the wood and with words. Some of our members have seen his ex-

tensive collection of artifacts, carvings, tools, furniture, and every conceivable article made from American chestnut wood. He and wife Charlotte were very generous hosts for the 1994 TACF Annual Meeting and, thereafter, our chapter meetings at the News Printing Company Farm where part of the collection was housed. They provided this for as long as their health permitted. Barney also initiated the Chapter newsletter -- he and Charlotte provided the layout, editing, printing, and mailing four times a year for three years and then continued to donate the printing of the newsletter, thereafter.

Barney was the epitome of a self-made man, having built up the News Printing Company, quite a large printing business, principally from his own exertions. He often expressed a desire to see the hills above his property planted in chestnut, and the chapter hopes to help make that a reality some day.

Barney was such a unique character -- dynamic, forthright, and outspoken, but with a soft heart. Anyone who met him, or even stood in the same room with him, is unlikely to forget him. He expressed himself in no uncertain terms on every topic, including PA-TACF issues. His speech and writing had the clarity that comes of unbendable self-confidence and courage. Whether one agreed with his conclusions or not, there was never any doubt that he cared deeply for the chapter and its mission. What a great loss to the PA Chapter, to the Chestnut tree, and of a dear friend!

He will be greatly missed!

Notes from the PA-TACF President— Bob Summersgill



We had quite an eventful 2002. Past President **Phil Gruszka** worked hard and diligently with other state chapters and officers of TACF to hammer out a workable germplasm agreement. In particular **Herb Darling** president of TACF deserves our applause. There will be one change stating, "This Agreement supersedes all previous agreements made by this recipient and TACF". We would like everyone to sign the new agreement so that it puts all growers on the same page. It will clear up problems of the various GPA's written and signed in the past. This disagreement between TACF and PA-TACF was so contentious, the Chapter did not receive Meadowview pollen in two growing seasons over wording of a legal document. Now if we can work out an agreement or at least a memorandum of understanding for Pennsylvania's DCNR we might be able to put this whole thing behind us and get down to the real task of restoring blight resistant American chestnut trees.

On an upbeat note **Larry Patchel** has been writing Grants for the past several years. The money has helped cover many of our costs from office expenses, planting materials, bucket trucks, to moving trees to Penn State. Larry's

latest feat was obtaining the largest grant to date of \$25,000 dollars from the National Tree Trust. **Tom Pugel** obtained a \$2,000 grant from Exxon, **Dave Armstrong** \$2,500 from The Wild Turkey Federation and **Bob Sweet** contributed fiberglass stakes used in planting our trees. There were many other personal contributions and one in particular is from **Chris Ditlow**. His works of wood art presented at various shows that have produced over \$3,000 each year. Our thanks to all who have given their time, energy and donations.

Gifts and grants give us an enormous boost to help pay our expenses plus pay for our share of the expenses of the Tree Breeding Coordinator position at Penn State. **Marshall Case**, Executive Director of TACF, **Kim Steiner** at Penn State, **Ann Leffel** and **Dave Armstrong** worked out a three-way agreement for the office. **Sara Fern Fitzsimmons** was hired in January 2003 to manage the enormous job of developing an automated system to track the pedigree of each tree and to manage the PA-TACF breeding Program.

Last, I want to put out a challenge to all growers. A nut planted on my farm in Westmoreland County on April 25th grew to 7 feet by the end of October. Although I did not personally plant it I did fertilize the tree twice with Miracle-Gro Now 7 feet in one season shouldn't be too difficult to beat. I'll give you a hint how to make them grow so fast - **You must talk to your trees!**

Solving a Chapter Problem - With Some Help From Our Friends

The Evolution of the Chapter's Tree Breeding Coordinator Position

By Ann Leffel & Dave Armstrong

Last August, several of our Chapter Board Members and key folks discussed a major PA-TACF problem – the need for a full time employee who could collect, automate, and update the voluminous amount of data of the hybrid and American orchards, orchards as well as the tree location data. **Ann Leffel**, the orchard managers and many coordinators have devoted many hours over the past eight years to accumulate this vast amount of data.

Our unanimous conclusion was to hire a qualified full-time person and find some way to pay a decent salary for these services. The PA-TACF Executive Board approved the proposal and budgeted for the position. (Where the money would come from, we had no clue!)

Good news - In September we were pleased to learn that our President, **Phil Gruszka**, and TACF Executive Director, **Marshal Case**, tentatively agreed to support the Tree Breeding Coordinator (TBC) position and share the costs.

More good news – **Dr. Kim Steiner**, PSU School of Forestry, suggested the TBC be a PSU staff member at the PSU Forest Technology Department working with **Tim Phelps**. The TBC would get the same benefits package as other PSU employees while TACF and PA-TACF share the salary, benefits, and office expenses.

Even more good news – **Tim Phelps** arranged with the PSU Information and Communication Technology office to help wit the development and online management of an automated system for the chestnut breeding program data at no cost to the Chapter.

Would you believe more good news? **Sara Fern Fitzsimmons**, our successful and proficient intern of 2000, was offered and accepted the job as coordinator of the PA-TACF breeding program and data manager. She relocated to State College and began the work on January 6th to design the new system.

It is great to have friends who are willing to help. Thanks to **Phil Gruszka**, **Marshal Case**, **Kim Steiner**, **Tim Phelps**, **our members**, and the **Pennsylvania State University Staff**.

The Return of the Former Intern

By: Sara Fern Fitzsimmons

Ahhh, it's good to be back. I was out of the loop for a couple of years, but I still recognize a lot of names, orchards, and trees. And, since it's been a while, I'm going to take this opportunity to (re)introduce myself everybody.

I was born and raised in the mountains of southern West Virginia. In choosing a college, I thought that I needed a change of pace – something more, well, exciting . . . and far from home. So I went to a small liberal arts college by the name of Drew University in Madison, New Jersey. There, I majored in biology, focusing my studies on ecology and evo-

lution. I received my degree in 1999 and immediately proceeded to Duke University to pursue a master's degree in environmental management at the Nicholas School of the Environment. There, I focused my study on forestry (and Blue Devil's basketball).

It was during my time at Duke that I first became introduced to the American Chestnut Foundation. At the beginning of 2000, I applied as an intern with the Pennsylvania Chapter through the Stanback Foundation. I was privileged to be chosen and first encountered the soon-to-be-familiar enthusiasm of the organization at the spring 2000 growers' meeting at Mt. Alto.

My internship then started officially in May 2000. Bob and Ann Leffel graciously allowed me to lodge with them during my time with the Foundation. And, I must admit, I had a fabulous time. I traveled almost 4000 miles across the state, seeing some beautiful places and trees. I met some of the most wonderful, kind, focused, and (I'm sorry) "nutty" people I've ever met. I was definitely hooked during my time



Sara Fern Fitzsimmons during her internship in 2000. She is now the PA-TACF Tree Breeding Coordinator located at PSU School of Forestry .

in Pennsylvania.

In August of 2000, my internship ended. I went back to Duke to complete my Master's Project on the data I collected while an intern. I started work as an editorial assistant with a magazine, *All About Beer*, in Durham, NC at the beginning of 2001. I graduated with my degree in May of 2001. After graduation, I continued my work with the magazine. At the end of summer 2001, I "retired". I moved back home to West Virginia and spent my time helping to restore my family's new century-old home: refinishing hardwood floors, replastering walls, painting, and even a little bit of carpentry.

Then, toward the end of last year, I was offered a position with PA-TACF. I accepted, and I'm very excited about this new position. The combined resources of the Pennsylvania chapter and national organization, in addition to those offered by Penn State should create a fabulous learning and research environment. I only hope that I can live up to and beyond everybody's expectations -- for the near future, look for a testing version of the database to be up and running by the March Grower's meeting. I look forward to seeing old friends and meeting new ones. And, if you ever want to talk chestnuts, beer, or college basketball, look me up.

Evaluation of Chestnut Backcross Trees for Blight Resistance And American Characteristics

By: Robert Leffel and William Peifer



PA-TACF inoculated the 1996 Brogue and Dornsife BC3 chestnut nurseries in 2000 and 1997 nurseries in 2001. Each BC3 and F-1, American, and Chinese check tree, 1 1/8 inches diameter or greater at breast height (dbh) was inoculated in late spring with chestnut blight strains SG1 2-3 (milder reaction) and EP 155 (severe reaction). Reactions to inoculations were scored in the fall after inoculation, and subsequently, on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 as cankers very small, with complete closure of wound by uninfected callus for both SG1 and 155, to 5 as cankers of both inoculum types sunken with abundant sporulation.

We expect F1 trees to vary from 2 to 4; American from 4 to 5; and Chinese from 1 to 3 (1 to 2 best), but reaction to inoculations are subject to environmental variation.

within each nursery, we select for American chestnut tree characteristics including lack of pubescence; stem color; stipule, lenticel, and bud characteristics; and tree form.

In the 1996 Brogue nursery, of the 84 BC3 inoculated trees, 'Ort' x CL287, 3 were selected by Dr. Hebard as "best" for resistance and tree form. Three additional Brogue BC3 trees with good resistance and tree form were transplanted (experimentally!) to Penn State University, prior to bud break in 2002 – the first of our BC3 trees "to go to college!" Five additional BC3 trees with good resistance also remain at Brogue. Of the total of 11 selected BR96 trees, only one produced male and female flowers in 2002 (7th year of growth).

Of the '97 BC3 populations at Brogue and Dornsife, the BC3's of Do x CL 53 appear to be more susceptible and possibly lack adequate resistance. The evaluation of all trees can change with time (some have!), and we will continue to evaluate BC3 trees of these populations until they begin to bloom, before final selections for intercrossing. The following charts show the results of inoculations:

Evaluating Blight Resistance		
Chestnut Blight Strain:		
Score	SG1 – milder	155 - severe
1	Both SG1 and 155 cankers very small with complete closure of the wound by uninfected callus.	Not as above, but not sunken with abundant sporulation
2		
3	Cankers mostly as in 1 and small (<3 - 5 cm. Long).	Cankers sunken with abundant sporulation
4	Cankers not as in 1, but not sunken with abundant sporulation	
5	Cankers of both inoculum strains sunken with abundant sporulation	

Range: Chinese 1-3 (1-2); F1's 2-4; American 4-5; BC's 2-5; BCF2's 1-5

With that number of genes and mode of inheritance conditioning resistance not completely understood – IN SHORT – we select for the highest level of resistance among BC3 trees, which can only be as resistant as F1 trees. As a model, we've assumed gene action in resistance to chestnut blight as: (1) 3 pairs of genes; (2) genes have equal effects; and (3) effects of genes are additive. Thus we expect the distribution of genes for resistance (R) and susceptibility (r) in chestnut populations, 3 gene pairs as:

DISTRIBUTION OF GENES IN POPULATIONS - 3 GENE PAIRS	
POPULATION	NUMBER OF R GENES:
	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
C R1R1R2R2R3R3	----- All
A r1r1r2r2r3r3	----- All
F1 R1r1R2r2R3r3	----- All
BC (8)	----- 1 3 3 1
F2 (64)	----- 1 6 15 20 15 6 1

Thus we determine the frequency distributions of canker scores for the 1996 and 1997 Brogue (Br) and 1997 Dornsife (Do) nurseries.

Subsequent to selection of most resistant BC3's

Frequency Distributions - Canker Scores (1 most to 5 Least Resistant)											
BR96 - BC's: Ort x CL287											
Brogue Orchard Trees	Canker Scores:										
	1.0	1.5	2.0	2.5	3.0	3.5	4.0	4.5	5.0	Total	
American									1	6	7
Chinese	1	5	3								9
F1			1	6	1						8
BC3			1	6	12	28	24	10	3		84

Frequency Distributions - Canker Scores (1 most to 5 Least Resistant)											
BR97 - BC's											
Brogue Orchard Trees	Canker Scores:										
	1.0	1.5	2.0	2.5	3.0	3.5	4.0	4.5	5.0	Total	
American							1			9	10
Chinese			6	1	1						8
F1			3	2	1	1					7
BC3s											
Jo x GR210			2	2	5	16	17	3	7		52
Or x GR 226			1	5	12	8	14	3	8		51
Do2 x CL 53					1	7	16	1	3		28

Frequency Distributions - Canker Scores (1 most to 5 Least Resistant)											
Do97 - BC's											
Dornsife Orchard Trees	Canker Scores:										
	1.0	1.5	2.0	2.5	3.0	3.5	4.0	4.5	5.0	Total	
American							2			1	3
Chinese			2	2	1	1					6
F1				2	2						4
97 BC3s											
Jo x GR210					6	14	19	4	13		56
Do 1,2 x CL53						4	10	3	14		31
RC 4,6 x GR210					4	2	8	3	8		25

Frequency Distributions - Canker Scores (1 most to 5 Least Resistant)											
Br 97 & Do 97 BC3s											
Br & Do Orchard Trees	Canker Scores:										
	1.0	1.5	2.0	2.5	3.0	3.5	4.0	4.5	5.0	Total	
Jo x Gr210											
Brogue			2	2	5	16	17	3	7		52
Dornsife					6	14	19	4	13		56
Do 1,2 x GR210											
Brogue					1	7	16	1	3		28
Dornsife						4	10	3	14		31

Brogue and Dornsife Orchards Comparison



The Grower's Corner

Tips on and Experiences of Planting, Pollinating, Harvesting and Nut Storage from around Pennsylvania

NEW GENERATIONS!!!

By: Ann Leffel, PA-TACF Board Coordinator for Tree Breeding

A new generation of nuts – BC3F2! A new generation of administration! A new generation of volunteers! The chapter has grown in all directions. With growth comes change. We have experienced a lot of necessary changes recently.

The very first chestnut seeds planted in the regional backcross breeding program in PA were planted at **Reineman Wildlife Sanctuary** in spring 1995. Since then, the chapter has produced, collected, and planted 17,701 nuts. With this spring's planting, we'll top 20,000! An incredible accomplishment for a volunteer project at an extremely small cost to the Foundation! The volunteers paid for and/or scrounged almost the entire orchard establishment and maintenance costs themselves.

Only the best will be chosen as parents for the 6th new generation of American Chestnut trees. The chapter will need a new generation of volunteers to accomplish this goal.

This year **Dave Armstrong**, operations coordinator, will dedicate more time to working with county and regional coordinators to make this happen. Our aim is working teams for the breeding work in as many as 13 different seed conservation areas of the state. Other volunteers will be needed for many other aspects of the program.

Keeping track of all of these trees has become a major task. Visiting orchard sites as frequently as we wish has become difficult. Coordinating the location, identification, hybridizing, harvesting, storage, and distribution of seed for planting has become very time consuming. Thus we have hired a full time employee.

Sara Fern Fitzsimmons, a Master's graduate from Duke University, is becoming the manager of the TACF Regional Breeding Program and Manager of the Data Base. We now have the benefit of her youth, energy, and training to help get the job done. Come and meet her at the March Meeting. And we have the challenge of providing the financing for her position – **a new generation of administration!** Our loyal members have come a long

PA-TACF - Summary of Seed Planted in Orchards, 1995-2002							
Source of		95 - '99	Year 2000	Year 2001	Year 2002	Total	Year 2003
Resistance	Type	# Seeded	# Seeded	# Seeded	# Seeded	Seeded	Planned
Clapper	BC3F2						331
Clapper	BC4						168
Graves	BC4				144	144	
Clapper	BC3	2264	2559	7		4830	
Graves	BC3	418	487	2120	106	3131	878
Various	BC1 & 2	643	250			893	234
Various	F-1			766	706	1472	122
Sub-Total		2682	3296	2893	956	10470	1733
Tests	B2F2	1896				1896	
American	Am	1586	1210	800	1420	5016	1400
Others		283	36			319	
Totals		6447	4542	3693	2376	17701	3133
OVERALL TOTAL TREES SEEDED - - -						20834	

The first trees planted, grew, were challenged with the blight, and selections of the most blight-resistant and most American-like were made. And so, the very first seed (BC3F2) of the fifth generation (331 of them) were produced this summer, using those selected trees. **A new generation of nuts!**

As the trees were challenged, now we are being challenged! We must produce 30,000 – 40,000 seed for each of two sources of resistance used in the program to complete this 5th generation. When you consider the goal – a population of blight-resistant trees that can sustain themselves in the forest- we're talking large numbers. Only about 1 of a hundred from this generation will be selected.

way with us, and now we will need your help more than ever to accomplish this exciting mission. Think about it. The approximately \$11,000 we receive from TACF each year will not begin to pay a full time salary, provide educational materials, displays, exhibit fees, newsletter production, and provide for the continuation of our many activities.

We have closed the York office this year as a cost saving measure. Dave has kindly agreed to locate it in his home this year.

So there you have it. A brief summary of 8 years of work. **Progress? Yes! Challenges ahead? YES!!!!**

Northeastern Tier Hardwood Association Presentation

By Chandis Klinger



Chandis is an active member of PA-TACF who coordinates the Snyder and Mifflin County activities. He is a dedicated chestnut tree grower and devotes much of his time to his passion of American Chestnut tree recovery.

On October 24, 2002, I gave a chestnut presentation to 23 people at the Northeastern Tier Hardwood Association meeting. Topics covered included the different characteristics of the American and Chinese chestnuts, the backcross breeding method, history of the chestnut foundation, the number of members, how long we have been working on the program and when we expect to have highly blight resistant chestnut trees. It was explained that we will be getting blight resistant trees in about half the time as expected by the foundation founders. The first nuts will be going into special test areas to evaluate for the desired blight resistance and to avoid the introduction of other problems as has happened with other hybridization programs.

The PA Chapter has approximately 10,000 various hybrid American (crossed with Chinese trees) which have then been backcrossed to American trees several times to recapture the timber qualities of the American while retaining the blight resistance of the Chinese tree. These seeds or seedlings were planted throughout the state. This has all been done by volunteers who have willingly donated their time, labor, land, equipment and cost to restore the American chestnut with blight resistance to the PA forest.

National Tree Trust of Washington, DC approves Grant for PA-TACF

By: Larry Patchel, Grants Chairman



The **National Tree Trust** promotes healthy communities by providing resources that educate and empower people to grow and care for urban and community forests.

I am happy to announce that the NTT Partnership Enhancement Monetary Grant Program accepted a proposal to provide the Chapter with a \$25,000 grant for

2003. These desperately needed funds will help pay the expenses of our Tree Breeding Coordinator salary, some office expenses, newsletter mailing fees and rental costs for bucket trucks which are used for pollinating and harvesting. The NTT will also allow these funds to be applied to chestnut education, tree transplanting, tree inoculation costs, and Chapter breeding supplies.

The NTT grant may also permit the purchase of deer protective fencing for some of our larger orchards such as the PSU Graves planting.

As part of the grant agreement, PA-TACF must match this \$25,000 with annual donations, sales of chestnut related items, membership dues and Volunteer hours.

Our thanks to the National Tree Trust for their ongoing support of the American chestnut tree recovery program.

Editor's Note: The Chapter is very grateful to Larry Patchel for his outstanding work as Grants Chairman.

Chestnut Tree Locations Around the Mid-Atlantic

Over the past eight years, 1995-2002, we have collected about 160 tree locator forms and leaf samples. Dr. Blair Carbaugh, Dr. Fred Hebard, Ann Leffel, and Dave Armstrong did the leaf sample analysis over the past years. During the month of December 2002, We catalogued all this data into a Microsoft Access program and plan to provide it to our County Coordinators as part of the new county coordinator program. The data also will be used this summer if we are successful in getting an intern from Duke University to do some American tree studies.

Here are some of the statistics from the newly cataloged data:

109 Trees are classified as classic American or acceptable American hybrids.

46 are classic American tree groups – growing together in the same area.

43 Counties are represented plus Maryland, Ohio and New Jersey.

The largest PA American diameter (DBH) is 24" – The Kelley Tree.

The PA American champion tree is in Sproul State Forest with a DBH of 18 inches and a height of 90 feet.

The champion MD American tree has a 34" DBH.

The tree data collected and catalogued shows: Location by town, county, GPS, tree name-usually by finder, DBH, height, blight status, submitter information, owner information, classification and person making the Identification and analysis.

The Chapter is still seeking more American chestnut trees and new sources of blight resistant through location of healthy blight resistant old (35 years or older) Chinese trees in each of the 13 regions for breeding purposes.. You may obtain a locator form from our web site: www.patacf.org. Please send a leaf and twig sample in the envelope with the form so we may evaluate the tree classification.

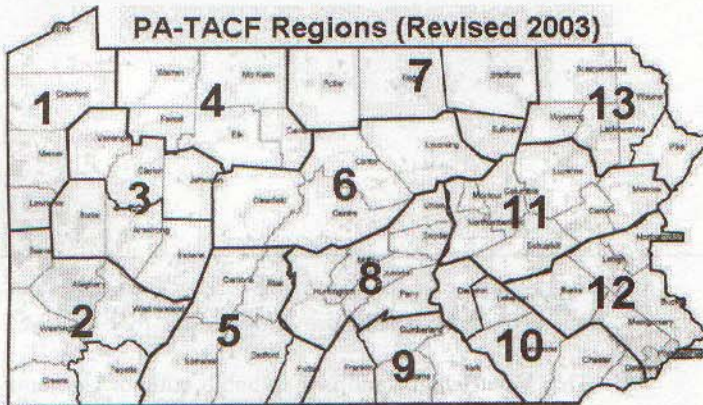
The County Coordinator Program

By: Dave Armstrong, Operations Coordinator

We have found that the activities of the local coordinators within each county provide the most efficient method of performing Chapter operations. They can best coordinate county tree locations, local planting, pollinating, harvesting, and orchard maintenance. We have also come to rely on this group of folks to promote the membership, chestnut presentations and county events.

Over the past few years the Chapter has not devoted enough attention on this very valuable resource and have now decided to focus on the County Coordinator Program by taking the following steps:

1. Remapping the counties into smaller regions and into seed zones recommended by PSU and PA-DCNR. The map below shows this revision that produces thirteen regions or conservation zones.



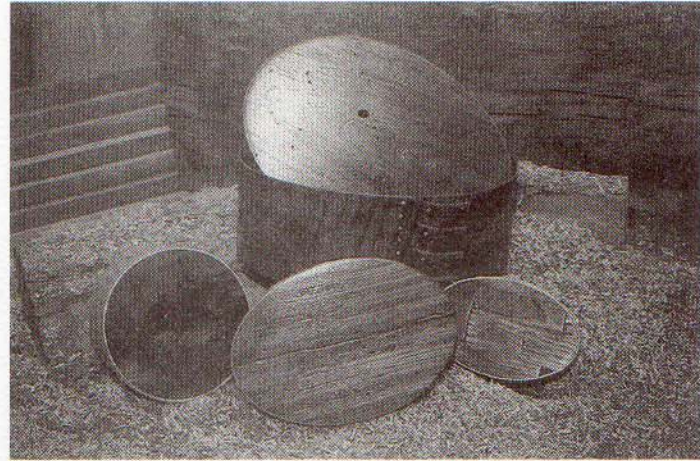
2. Contact current coordinators and all members within the counties. Our goal will be to increase the number of county coordinators to two or more per county. Several county coordinators working together have been very successful over the past years.
3. As the coordinators are developed in each county, they may nominate a regional team leader to represent that region, promote communications and activities.
4. The chapter will provide the regions with information regarding current tree locations, orchard locations, and breeding program requests. The Chapter will also provide membership data, presentation materials, display materials and assist the coordination of local events.

Our goal in 2003 is to have one or more county coordinator in each of Pennsylvania's 67 Counties.

**If you would like to volunteer, please contact me.
(717) 632-8669**

The Art and Craft of Shaker Boxes

Two of our new members, Garry and Cindy Blevins of Glen Rock, PA have developed a unique craft of designing and producing beautiful wooden boxes for various uses such as sewing, recipes, baskets, desk sets, jewelry, etc. They are handcrafted in an authentic Shaker style secured only by custom hand-tooled copper tacks and wooden pegs. Two coats of hand-rubbed finish give the box a lasting beauty. Most of the box tops are made of American chest-



nut wood

Garry started in 1997 with the first box that he presented to Cindy for Christmas. Today, they are exhibiting in prestigious locations like the Shaker Village in Pleasant Hill, KY and the number one ranked traditional show in the nation, Penn's Colony in historic Saxonburg, PA.

We were pleased to have Garry and Cindy as our Pa Chapter's guest craftsman at the January Farm Show where they demonstrated chestnut Shaker box building.

We are also developing a relationship with them to sell Shaker boxes through this newsletter and our annual Chapter events. **For a brochure or questions, Garry and Cindy can be contacted at (717) 227-0593.**



Gary Blevins with his Shaker box display and Chandis Klinger at the chestnut display poised and ready to handle the PA-TACF exhibit at the 2003 Farm Show visitors

Pennsylvania Chapter
The American Chestnut Foundation
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 Hanover, PA 17331-8608

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The Chestnut Tree Newsletter

Notes from West Salem, WI

by Dr. Bill Lord, TACF Historian and PA Member

In November I visited a remarkable stand of mature American chestnuts near West Salem, WI, as part of the TACF fall meeting. The stand began circa the late 1800s when a farmer planted a few chestnut seeds he had brought from the east. Only seven of the original trees survive, but their progeny dominate an area of about 50 acres. Although blight disease has been present for at least ten years and a good number of trees have already died, many of the trees are still healthy.

The area is both a look into the past and a preview of the future. It was awesome to see pure stands of young chestnut, self pruned, and pole straight, rising into the upper canopy. That was once a familiar recovery scene at the turn of the last century after lumbermen had denuded the mountain forests and left them in smoldering ruins. The chestnut seed with its tough covering survived the heat and produced trees that recovered the land. In the future, our planting of blight resistant chestnuts will not have to "run" a gauntlet of fire, but it is hoped that the hybrids will bring a return to dominance.

My visit to West Salem also answered a perplexing question. Since joining TACF I have learned that a bag of freshly picked chestnuts soon becomes hard and dry. I wondered what became of those remaining on the forest floor. For how long a period were they both edible and available for wildlife? I found my answer as I scratched away the leaf litter. It was now late October. The **Bockenhour family**, owners of the property, and the wildlife had already gathered a bountiful harvest. Yet nuts a-plenty remained. A pocket full of sweet, tasty nuts

could be gathered in a minute. Preserved beneath the fallen leaves, their abundance would provide wildlife food well into winter.

The West Salem stand is a valuable outdoor laboratory for ongoing studies by **Dr. Bill MacDonald** and other TACF scientists. We owe great thanks to **Jim Ulring** and **Dr. Cameron Gundersen** who negotiated a ten-year agreement with the Bockenhour family to keep the land as a chestnut preserve. And certainly we all thank the Bockenhour family. They were wonderful hosts.



Dr Paul Sisco stands beside one of the original American chestnut trees planted at West Salem, Wisconsin. The stand of chestnuts started with 7 trees in the 1800's and today covers 50 acres of mountainside. About 25% of these trees are blighted.