



CONTACT

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Forester

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WHAT: Training Workshop for American Chestnut Restoration and Surface Mine Reforestation

WHEN: Tuesday, April 8, 2014 from 6:00pm – 8:30pm

WHERE: Hopedale Volunteer Fire Department Community Center
103 Firehouse Lane
Hopedale, OH 43976

The American Chestnut Foundation Continues Historically Largest Project to Establish American Chestnut Trees on Reclaimed Mine Lands

Anyone interested in learning about American chestnut restoration, opportunities for surface mine reforestation, USDA –Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Programs, The American Chestnut Foundation’s (TACF) breeding program, and volunteer opportunities with TACF is invited to attend the evening program from 6:00 – 8:30pm on April 8. Persons wishing to assist with the surface mine reclamation planting in Harrison County on April 14, or with subsequent monitoring of the planting, are particularly encouraged to attend the workshop at the Hopedale Volunteer Fire Department Community Center. Prospective volunteers who cannot attend the talk can email or call Michael French at (812) 447-3285 (michael@acf.org). This workshop will inform attendees about American chestnut history and biology and TACF’s efforts to restore this tree to our forests. Attendees will also learn about opportunities for landowner assistance for reforesting surface mines, surface mine reclamation and reforestation techniques, and the significance of this planting.

The planting in Harrison County is a continuation of a large-scale, multi-year project by TACF to reforest 12 reclaimed mine sites throughout five states (PA, OH, WV, VA, KY) funded in part by a Conservation Innovation Grant from the USDA- NRCS. Over three years, Approximately 250,000 seedlings, including more than 14,000 blight-resistant American chestnuts will be planted by TACF and project cooperators on a total of 360 acres. This project is the largest planting of potentially blight-resistant American chestnut trees in the Foundation’s history and marks a milestone in the restoration of this once dominant native tree. Forester Michael French of The American Chestnut Foundation says, “This NRCS grant is allowing us to demonstrate how chestnuts and high value hardwoods can return mine sites to a healthy forest, and also to improve water quality and wildlife habitat.”

On April 14, The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF) will plant approximately 625 potentially blight-resistant American chestnuts on 1 acre of a reclaimed coal mine site in Harrison County. Approximately 20 acres surrounding the 1-acre volunteer area will be planted by professional tree planters. TACF's potentially blight-resistant American chestnuts are the result of more than 30 years of careful breeding and research by TACF's scientists in an effort to restore this native tree. Assisting in the volunteer tree planting event are members of The American Chestnut Foundation, Bishop John K. Mussio Jr. High School and volunteers from the local area.

Once the mighty giants of the eastern forests, American chestnuts stood up to 100 feet tall, and numbered in the billions. They were a vital part of the forest ecology, a key food source for wildlife and an essential component of the human economy. In 1904, a blight accidentally imported from Asia, spread rapidly through the American chestnut population. By 1950 it had killed virtually all the mature trees from Maine to Georgia. Several attempts to breed blight resistant trees in the mid-1900s were unsuccessful.

In 1983, a dedicated group of scientists formed The American Chestnut Foundation and began a special breeding process, which in 2005 produced the first potentially blight resistant trees called Restoration Chestnuts 1.0. Now assisted by almost 6,000 members and volunteers in 23 states, the organization is undertaking the planting of Restoration Chestnuts in select locations throughout the eastern US as part of the Foundation's early restoration efforts.

TACF is a 501(c)(3) conservation organization headquartered in Asheville, NC. For more information on TACF and their work to restore the American chestnut tree, contact Mila Kirkland at (828)281-0047 or email: mila@acf.org. Or visit www.acf.org.