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Billed as "hand-on sessions", there were opportunities for forum participants to visit local farms and facilities during the afternoon, one of which was an Agricola hosted Learning Box and tour of the TVA Orchard. In attendance were 10-15 participants of knowledgeable and well-informed, activist farmers who sprinkled their host with probing and penetrating inquiry; most beyond the experience and paygrade of the instructor. All in all, it was an especially rewarding day for ASAN members. And TACF. Several membership partners will undoubtedly ensue.

Chestnut Burrs

Alabama's chestnut world has lost a true friend at the top of the world of state forestry in the recent resignation of State Forester, Linda Casey, effective January 1. She submitted her resignation at the Oct. 15 Alabama Forestry Commission meeting. A forceful and articulate voice in our efforts to Save the Orchard at Muscle Shoals, Ms Casey argued eloquently of our contributions to the return of the chestnut. We will miss her advocacy and wish for our friend a bright future.

The private farmer and forest landowner's organization known as The Alabama Treasure Forest Association (AFTA) has formed an express partnership under the umbrella of Alabama Farmers Federation, announced and effective October 4, 2013. AFTA popularized the state automobile license that reads: "I'd rather be in the woods..."

TACF member Dr. Scott Enebak with Professors Kever and Chappelka of AU's School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences are featured in the current Alabama Forest magazine for their efforts to remediate the Toomer's Corner Oaks, following this football season. The Auburn Oaks will continue with many of their progeny producing seedlings to benefit scholarships in the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences. Professor Enebak is also Director of the Southern Forest Management Cooperative charged with production of the seedlings; in addition, the early stages of TACF were in his spare bedroom for about 4 yrs.

Wylie Johnson, an Alabama TACF member, passed away on November 2, 2013 at the age of 94. You may recall that Wylie is the landowner we did a ceremonial B3F3 planting with a couple of years ago on his property in Bibb County. Wylie remembered enjoying chestnuts from American chestnut trees as a boy and really wanted to be a part its return. He WAS! ...and enthusiastically so. Wylie's son, Ben Johnson, is asking people to remember Wylie with donations to the American Chestnut Foundation.

Please visit the Al state chapter's new website; note the spiffy logo (both appear on the first page); also note the new mission statement on the masthead.

Congratulations to Jack Rist on becoming Director Emeritus of our state's chapter.

As you begin to give thoughts of the upcoming Holiday Season, consider gifting family members and loved ones an annual membership in TACF. It makes a great holiday gift for anyone on your gift list.



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*State chapter annual meeting
Bham Bot Gdns
Dec 7 @ 10:00*

The Mission of the Alabama Chapter of the American Chestnut Foundation: Restoring an American treasure to the forests of Alabama.



THE AMERICAN CHESTNUT FOUNDATION®
BackCrossTalk
Alabama Chapter newsletter
al-tacf.org
Fall 2013

Chestnut Restoration – the environment, the future

Alabama Happenings

Forthcoming Chestnut Events

Nov 22, 23 and 24 are days Tom Saielli will be in Alabama to initiate Huntsville's Redstone Orchard planting; if willing and interested in this planting, please respond to Pres Jack Agricola
Day 1, Jack will drive to the Muscle Shoals orchard on Friday November 22nd. All present will assemble, and practice using, all the new equipment on the orchard.
Day 2, November 23rd, We will rendezvous with Hill Craddock (and hopefully either Clint Neel or Fred Hebard) to evaluate cankers at Jerry's and at TVA. We will also collect all the bare root seedlings needed for the NASA planting from Jimmy.
Day 3, November 24th, Plant at the NASA site.

TACF Membership Pockets Formed as Sub-Chapters

Pockets of TACF membership groups are referred to informally as "sub-chapters" and were initiated last Spring to lessen volunteer travel time to existing orchards, while increasing involvement opportunities for those volunteers. Geographically located around the state near cooperators, existing or planned orchard sites, these sub-chapters were recently formed in Huntsville, Florence and Sewanee, TN. At least three additional ones are planned for formation in 2014.

Florence's sub-chapter, under the local leadership of Will Calhoun who is owner of a chestnut grove of twenty year old chestnut hybrids has provided yeoman-duties in the TVA Orchard during Spring workdays; providing inoculations and grafting services, and good old fashioned expertise. Will Calhoun also introduced the old timers to the advantages of motorized UTE services, which proved instrumental in hauling fertilizer measured in tonnage to the remote sections of the orchard.

While each sub-chapter has already provided auxiliary manpower for traditional work days, each has too plans for significant orchard formation in their respective vicinities. In Huntsville, a seed orchard to be called Redstone Orchard will in the coming month be planted as the newsletter goes to press. Tom Saielli has designed this orchard plan utilizing important lines of Alabama resistance with tremendous prep work performed by local chestnut enthusiast Thad

Striblin and Greg Hicks. Local organizers of the sub-chapter at Sewanee, TN, Pratt Paterson and Alex Neubauer will assist students and faculty within the Forestry Department at the University on a mammoth undertaking described as a 'progeny test', consisting of between 600-900 trees. Utilizing what the university refers to as a large outdoor teaching facility, the 13,000 acre "domain" will literally be the proving grounds for some of the hard science of restoration, providing scientists the initial examination of the nut's survivability.

Potential Partner Found Out-side the-Box

Until recent impetus from the national TACF office, the chestnut connection to food has played a secondary role for our development program. However, today we may recall the ten reasons for saving the American Chestnut, "in a nutshell", with Number 8 being Cuisine. So consider the thoughts of the imminent food guru Michael Pollan who isolates a fundamental attraction: "Cooking situates us in the world in a very special place, facing the natural world on one side and the social world on the other, The cook stands squarely between nature and culture, conducting a process of translation and negotiation."

Several state members recently attended a north Alabama, 2013 Regional Food and Farms Forum, located at the Commercial Culinary Center of Florence, October 9. Hosted by The Alabama Sustainable Agricultural Network (ASAN), this forum of over 100 participants was admirably directed by Alice Evans, State Coordinator of the host organization and newest partner-friend of TACF.

The stated purpose of her organization is simply to bring farmers and consumers together to build a robust food system, while the purpose of the day's activities was to provide the participant with a tremendous amount of information about how to help improve farming operations while congenially connecting with others. The day's activities were well organized and divided into 45 minute roundtable discussions on a diverse spectrum of farm and food related topics. There were approximately 12-15 topics for participants to choose between; and, with sufficient duplication of subject that one might return a second time for more discussion, or development of a specialized problem or concern. The diversity of topics were well-suited for both professional and beginning farmers, including for chestnutters orchard design, maintenance and unique problems of farming. None, of course, were specific to chestnut production but there was much on general pomology and related farming. Some discussions focused on educational generalities, such as "Seeds and our Genetic Future", or "Culinary and Medicinal Herbs, Teas and Flowers". Others were more practical in nature, "Cover Crops 101", which addressed specifically cover crops for weed control.

Continued

Message from the President

As I wrote in my Spring newsletter, paraphrasing Dr. Jim Maddox's sentiments, "so many good people" working together is the glue that binds members of the Alabama Chapter to our cause.

In the best sense, the chestnut tree and the corollary task of its restoration is the spiritual bond that symbolizes an existing filial partnership. For example, defying our worldly obsession with instant gratification, one youthful father, a professional farmer by trade, realizes a legacy commitment predicated on restoring a lost heritage for his family. To quote member Joe Murphy of Pike County "I would love to help re-establish something magnificent that was once here." Joe's story and the cover image of his family graces the current issue of Alfa Insurance's *Neighbors* magazine.

As heartening as his story, its power rests implicitly on a partnership initiated by Mac, our immediate-past president, who touched Debra Davis, the editor of the magazine years before. His residual message rested powerfully in her minds' eye before springing perfectly designed in its present form onto the pages of her design. Undoubtedly Mac's "glue", his ability to imbue the story of the American chestnut with meaningful connection, will continue to provide spiritual answers for a complex question years in the making, or what I previously referred to as The Big Guess. We are all players in this guess work.

Less obvious partnerships sometimes are the ones we foster with people and organizations that are on the surface, seemingly oblique. Just as the expression "a walk on the moon" in its simplicity belies in its answer great organizational complexity, so too does our simple mission statement belie the incredible difficult issues before us. So naturally our new Huntsville partners at NASA are likely to explore a few answers for our sub-chapter located in the very same community known to the world as "home" to our nation's space travel.

Similarly, many chestnut partnership seeds were recently sown at a regional food forum in Florence, the bounty of which will be answers our Florence sub-chapter may reap in the coming years. The entire state chapter will benefit from partnership connections assembled from disparate partners such as these.

Please enjoy our pages here while exploring your own oblique partnerships. And, please, imagine in your own community, potential partnerships we are yet to imagine. Pass your thoughts and suggestions along to any member of the TACF, so that we can formally explore the synergy of talents and resources available to all in this the great State of Alabama.

Grafting for wild American chestnut pollen By Jim Maddox

Grafting wild chestnut trees onto established orchard trees has been practiced by many individuals and state chapters through the years. In the past, the Alabama chapter has grafted scion wood from non flowering wild chestnut trees onto Chinese, American, or partially resistant hybrids with limited success rate. However, successful grafted trees were planted into protected soil site locations and grown to maturity (~ 4 to 5yrs.) to obtained pollen that can be used in the backcross breeding such as the Father Tree Program at the Meadowview, VA breeding station. Several grafted father trees have been produced using this technique to give us new lines of backcross hybrids.

In 2012 our chapter grafting volunteer, Toby Hutcheson from Phil Campbell, Alabama, decided to try cleft grafting onto some mature Morris Stamford hybrid trees at the TVA orchard site. The seed of these hybrid chestnut trees were obtained from Dr. Sandra Ananostakis and planted at the TVA Muscle Shoals orchard in 1997. These hybrid trees have proven to have resistance to the chestnut blight and the root rot Ink Disease. Their growth stature is small with a central leader with many low growing limbs similar to a peach orchard tree. This limb arrangement allows easy access for cleft grafting.

Scion wood from 11 different Alabama wild American trees was collected by Marty Schulman, David Morris, Edwin Camp, and other volunteers during the winter of 2012. The refrigerator stored scion wood was cleft grafted onto 9 different Morris Stamford trees in May of 2012. A total of 59 graft attempts produced 31 successful grafts with some attaining 10 to 12 feet of growth in one season. Pollen was produced by nearly a third of these grafts during the following 2013 season after one years growth.

Three previously grafted trees produced pollen that was used in the 2012 breeding season and produced 113 nuts planted in the TVA Nursery in the spring of 2013. Seedlings produced from these nuts will be planted into selected field orchards during the dormant season of 2013 and winter of 2014.

The time required to produce pollen suitable for use in the breeding program by this cleft grafting method versus transplanting wild seedlings or planting nuts can be shortened by 4 or 5 years. It has the added advantage of growing on an establish root stock resistant to Ink Disease and its' stem is resistant to the chestnut blight. These grafted trees can be planted in a more accessible and environmentally controlled location.



Continued

General Members Annual Meeting: **December 7, 10:00** am at Birmingham Botanical Gardens, lecture hall in the main building. We'll be through by noon, even if time allows for us to gather for board meeting following the general topics and discussions, if there is voting business.

Otherwise Beth Maynor Young will present a visual overview of her book, a pictorial exhibit in book form, dealing with Alabama's significant long-leaf pine plantings. There are many parallels that track the restoration of and advocacy for this species to our own efforts in the world of chestnuts. Taking a wide view of these parallels may prove beneficial institutionally, especially if the vehicle of such exploration is the beautiful imagery and craftsmanship of an artist of the stature of Beth Maynor Young.

Also, please utilize this opportunity to broaden our membership base. Invite a colleague, a friend, or an acquaintance (a family member?) who you know has passing interest in matters "environmental" and "restorative".

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We are currently evaluating grafting wild American scion wood to these Morris Stamford trees using the chip bud, stick bud – chip, and stick bud – slip techniques. Graft stock from 10 different wild trees was grafted onto 6 different mature Morris Stamford trees growing at the TVA Muscle Shoals orchards. This work was done by volunteer Alex Nebauer from Belvidere, TN on June 12, 2013. Results are preliminary but look promising. First season growth is not as large as was seen in the cleft grafts of the previous year. Possibly this is due to the grafting date being one month later in June.

Thanks to the many volunteers who help make this chestnut program possible and especially in recent years during my health issues



So you think you may have found an American chestnut? Be aware that all chestnuts can cross-pollinate, so that the chestnut you are trying to identify may actually be a mix of two or more different types of chestnuts, known as a hybrid.

We can attempt to identify your chestnut if you are unable to do so by means of a leaf and twig sample.

Please press one or two fresh leaves between cardboard with a 4-6" twig. Don't use plastic unless it is perforated or the leaves will mold. Crushed and bent leaves will not be in good enough condition to positively analyse.

Along with your contact information & the location of the tree, mail to:

American Chestnut Foundation
14005 Glenbrook Ave.
Meadowview, VA 24361

Become a Member Today

As a member of The American Chestnut Foundation, you will be part of an extraordinary journey that began in 1983 when a small group of prominent scientists established the premier organization dedicated to restoring the American chestnut.

As a member, you will receive the following:

- All TACF publications
- A special TACF car decal
- Membership in one of our state chapters: AL, CT, GA, IN, KY, MA, MD, ME, NC/SC, NY, OH, PA, TN, VA, VT/NH & WV
- Access to expert advice on growing and caring for American chestnut trees
- Opportunities to participate in local breeding and research activities
- And much, much more

Join the Crusade

Invite others to become TACF members

I want to help restore the American Chestnut tree!

- Chestnut Leaf (\$5,000+) Bronze Leaf (\$250-\$499)
 Gold Leaf (\$1,000-\$4,999) Green Leaf (\$100-\$249)
 Silver Leaf (\$500-\$999) Regular Member (\$40-\$99)
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Please make check payable to **The American Chestnut Foundation**

or Please bill my credit card (*Visa/Mastercard only*)\$ _____

Name on Card _____

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Signature _____

Please mail this form to: TACF
160 Zillicoa St, Ste D Asheville, NC 28801

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