

August 25, 2003

Outing and Picnic on Saturday, September 6, for All American Chestnut Enthusiasts in Maryland

You have received this notice because you are a current member of The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF), or you have previously expressed interest in volunteer American chestnut restoration activities in Maryland. TACF has sent us the list of members in Maryland so that we can invite your support in our work.

OUTING AND PICNIC

We are getting together at the Turner Farm, at 10:00 am on Saturday, September 6, to do a little work, have a picnic, and bring everyone up to date. Turner Farm is part of the 3,000-acre Sugarloaf Mountain recreational complex, owned and operated for the benefit of the public, by Stronghold, Inc. in Frederick County, Maryland. PLEASE JOIN US!

If you can come, please e-mail or call Essie: hburnworth@msn.com / (301) 762-6715 or Barbara: BBKnapp@slsoft.com / (301) 916-6133, so we can plan activities and food. Please bring your own sandwich, and we will provide drinks, chips, cookies, and paper products. We will break into teams to inventory 300 American chestnut seedlings planted last year, weed the nursery bed at Turner Farm, and then gather for our meeting and picnic about 11:30. Directions are below.

MARYLAND CHAPTER OF TACF

The biggest news is that we have met the requirements for establishing a Maryland Chapter of TACF. The Steering Committee, chosen last December 19 at the planting of seedlings at Sugarloaf Mountain, has initiated incorporation in Maryland as a non-profit organization. When this is completed, the Committee will petition the national TACF organization for full chapter status at the annual TACF meeting in October.

BACKGROUND

For those of you who are TACF members but who have not been involved in our recent activities in Maryland, a brief summary of what our informal group has been doing is in order. We have:

1. Established a back-cross breeding orchard at ThorpeWood in the Catoctin Mountains near Thurmont, Maryland four years ago. The purposes of the orchard are to support TACF's Maryland Regional Adaptability Study and to augment an educational program about chestnut restoration for schools and community groups.
2. Restarted the American chestnut restoration program at Sugarloaf Mountain, begun by Stronghold, Inc. in 1969, by planting 300 American chestnut seedlings at three sites on the Mountain last December. These seedlings came from the American Chestnut Cooperators' Foundation (ACCF) at Virginia Tech. We also grafted scions from blight-resistant trees from ACCF orchards onto surviving American chestnuts at Sugarloaf Mountain in April.
3. Established a Maryland germplasm repository for American chestnuts at Sugarloaf Mountain last March. In this nursery, we planted over 1500 nuts collected from the American chestnuts at Sugarloaf and from other individual surviving trees in Maryland.
4. Conducted controlled pollination in June of some of the trees belonging to Barbara Knapp using back-cross pollen from TACF's Research Farms in Meadowview, Virginia.

To stay in touch and to invite volunteers to these activities, we have sent out six informal newsletters so far, and many of you may have been receiving them. Please let us know if you would prefer e-mail distribution, and give us your current e-mail address. Reply to:

hburnworth@msn.com or BBKnapp@ssoft.com

FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Nut gathering usually takes place during the last two weeks of September and the first two weeks of October. Nuts will be harvested and labeled as to origin at Sugarloaf and at Barbara Knapp's in Germantown. The bags used for controlled pollination will be removed, and the new backcross nuts as well as open-pollinated nuts from Barbara's trees will be harvested. All nuts will be processed to prevent weevil damage and stored under refrigeration to be planted in the Sugarloaf germplasm nursery next spring.

Once the seedlings in the nursery are dormant, during early November, we will dig them up, and use some to replace dead seedlings from the 300 planted last year. Others will be packaged and distributed to those interested in planting some American chestnuts.

VOLUNTEERS

We urge all of you to come and participate on September 6 and on the other important dates throughout the "chestnut" year. We had twenty-three people at the December planting and 18 for the initial nut-planting last March 16. A dozen volunteers helped with the controlled pollination in June. Special skills are not required, and the group always has a good time together.

DIRECTIONS TO TURNER FARM AT SUGARLOAF MOUNTAIN

Take I-270 North to Exit 22 -- MD 109. There is a sign to Sugarloaf Mountain. At the end of the exit ramp, turn right (west) on 109 and continue to MD 95, which is Comus Road, and turn right. The now-closed Comus Inn will be on your right at the corner. Follow Comus Road to the square with the entrance to Sugarloaf Mountain on your right. Proceed across the square and stay on Comus Road, which is the right fork in the road. You will see a large pond on your left as you leave the square. This road leads past the Stronghold Mansion entrance and dead ends at the entrance to Turner Farm on Mount Ephraim Road.

PLEASE COME AND SHARE YOUR INTERESTS WITH US!!

The Steering Committee: Dr. Doug Boucher, Burnie Burnworth, Jim Coleman, Barbara Knapp, Jim Hill, Essie Burnworth, Steve Dodge, and Robert Strasser