

Maryland Chapter of The American Chestnut Foundation

Newsletter #9 – August 11, 2004

Tax Exempt Status Obtained

The Chapter Treasurer successfully petitioned the US Internal Revenue Service for tax exempt status as a 501 (c) (3) organization. This means that contributions to the Chapter are tax-deductible for the donor and tax-free to the Chapter.

Montgomery County Champion Treated with Hypovirulence

In January, Dr. Donald L. Nuss and his team of research assistants at the University of Maryland's Center for Biosystems Research came to Barbara Knapp's property in Germantown to sample six blight cankers on her champion American chestnut tree. The team grew the fungus samples, established the vegetative compatibility of each one, and prepared hypovirulent strains of the blight fungus for each of the three vegetative compatibility types found to be present. In April, Dr. Nuss returned, and with the help of volunteers and an extension ladder, all six cankers were injected with the specially prepared hypovirulent fungal strains. Over the next few months, these cankers will be examined to determine the success of the treatment in arresting canker growth.

Winter Meeting at Fox Haven

On February 8, Fox Haven Farms hosted the Chapter's Winter Meeting in Jefferson, Maryland, attended by 40 members. The guest speaker was Dr. Donald L. Nuss, who discussed his research into genetic engineering of hypoviruses. Specifically he described the canker sampling, vegetative compatibility testing, and preparation of hypovirulent fungal strains for Barbara Knapp's tree.

Members of the Fox Haven Council presented an overview of Fox Haven Farms and its interest in participating in the TACF backcross breeding

program. Marshal Case, President and CEO of TACF, was present and addressed the group with news of activities in areas outside of Maryland.

The Chapter membership voted to support the Fox Haven plan and to raise money to erect a deer fence enclosing a three-acre orchard.

Website Established

At the Fox Haven meeting, the membership agreed that the Chapter needed a website, and a student member of TACF took the initiative to build one that was operational by the end of March. Our website, www.mdtaf.com, includes newsletters, pictures, detailed information on our various activities, and provisions for financial contributions.

Nursery Planted with Nuts from 2003

On March 16, about 40 volunteers gathered to plant the American chestnut nuts harvested in 2003, processed for weevils, and stored over the winter in a refrigerator at Sugarloaf Mountain. The nursery was doubled in size to 8 rows to accommodate the number of nuts to be planted. Though the germination rate was lower than last year, there are over 800 seedlings now growing in the nursery, which will be dug up and distributed when they are dormant this fall.

Grafting of American Chestnut Scions

In April, Burnie successfully grafted a scion provided by The American Chestnut Cooperators' Foundation (ACCF) from a blight tolerant American chestnut cultivar known as Mountain Lake onto a rootstock in the East Field at Sugarloaf Mountain. The three blight resistant cultivars grafted in 2003 are also thriving in East Field.

Inoculation at ThorpeWood

On May 29, Sara Fitzsimmons, TACF's Breeding Coordinator at Penn State, led a group of 20 volunteers in inoculating more than two dozen trees in the ThorpeWood orchard with known strains of blight fungus. By observing the effects of the inoculations over the next year, Steve Dodge and other volunteers will be able to identify those trees demonstrating blight

resistance, and can remove the trees that appear to be most susceptible to the fungus.

TACF Germplasm Agreement Signed

At their Board of Directors meeting in June, Stronghold, Inc. signed the TACF Germplasm Agreement covering the 3,000 acre Sugarloaf Mountain property. This permits backcross nuts to be planted in the Maryland germplasm nursery, controlled pollination of Sugarloaf Mountain trees with backcross pollen, and ultimately, the planting of backcross trees and seed orchards at Sugarloaf.

Controlled Pollination

Because of the extensive damage the Brood X cicadas did to American chestnut trees, very few blooms were available for pollination, and the nut crop this fall will be drastically reduced.

On June 12, a few volunteers were able to bag 49 flowers in the East and West Field research Areas and on the Mountain itself. They returned on June 20 with three types of backcross (B2) pollen provided by Dr. Fred Hebard at Meadowview Research Farms and completed the pollination.

Fox Haven Orchards

Over the summer, the Fox Haven chestnut orchards were mowed and mulched and landscape fabric was installed around each seedling. Kathy Marmet developed a deer fence specification based on inputs from TACF and solicited bids. Contracts for the materials and for installation of the fence were signed by Doug Boucher in early August, and the fence is expected to be completed by October 1.

A substantial gift from one of our Chapter members is allowing us to proceed with fencing the Fox Haven orchard this year.

Master Plans Drafted

As our Chapter grows and our activities become more diverse, several volunteers expressed the need for a Technical Master Plan to guide our

efforts. Doug Boucher convened a Planning Committee on June 29 to discuss the broad outlines of what the Technical Plan should include. Other volunteers brought up the need for guidance in other aspects of our Chapter activities such as growing our membership. It was decided that the Chapter would sponsor a family of Master Plans.

Technical Master Plan

Membership Master Plan

Publications Master Plan

Financial Master Plan -- pending

These have been drafted and are being reviewed by TACF headquarters, and Dr. Fred Hebard is also reviewing the Technical Master Plan.

These Plans will be briefly described at our Annual Meeting and the members present will be asked to approve them. Copies will be available at the Annual Meeting and by request.

Please note ...

This Newsletter, along with the invitation to our Annual Meeting, is being mailed to all TACF members and volunteers. To save money and effort, news and invitations to smaller events during the year are sent out by e-mail and posted to our website, www.mdtacf.com.

We will be happy to mail these items to anyone without e-mail who requests this service. Please call **Essie Burnworth at (301) 762-6715** or **Barbara Knapp at (301) 916-6133** to get on the Special Mailing List. Thanks for your understanding.