

Nut Planting at Sugarloaf Mountain Saturday, March 13, 2004



On Saturday, March 13, thirty-three volunteers gathered at 10:00 am at Turner Farm to plant approximately 2,800 American chestnut nuts that had been collected and processed last fall. It was a beautiful spring day with lots of sun and temperatures in the 50's.

The Maryland germplasm nursery bed at Turner Farm was doubled in size to accommodate the number of nuts. The Stronghold staff had added 4x4's to enclose the perimeter of the nursery.

After opening remarks on recent activities and instructions on how to plant the nuts by Burnie Burnworth, the group formed small teams, took tools and nuts and got to work. A map had been prepared allocating nuts to rows according to the number of the tree from which the nuts had come so that roughly 350 nuts were to be planted in each of the eight rows.

In addition to the 2,718 nuts from the trees on the mountain and in the East and West Fields at Sugarloaf, Barbara Knapp brought nuts from two of her American chestnuts, and Doug Boucher brought 100 nuts marked "Corigan" that were sent to him by Carl Mayfield.

After the ID tags were placed in the rows and the nuts were planted, volunteers covered the rows with peat moss.

A separate team of volunteers erected the solar-powered electric deer fence around the nursery, placing the lowest wire in a position to zap a squirrel's tail!

Meanwhile, some volunteers had built a nice fire in the fire ring by the picnic tables, and chili, hot dogs and cowboy coffee were cooking. About 12:15, the planting was done, the fence was working, and everyone gathered at the picnic tables for lunch.

Doug Boucher conducted a brief meeting, and it was agreed that in May, the 20-odd people who volunteered for the American Chestnut Locator Committee would meet at Turner Farm for a field

lesson in recognizing American chestnuts.

Lynn Geletka, Dr. Nuss's research assistant, reported that the three hypovirulent fungal strains with which to treat Barbara Knapp's champion tree had been made and were growing. She said that April would be the right time to inject these strains into the cankers on the tree.

Sixty remaining seedlings that had over-wintered in the nursery were distributed, along with numbered aluminum tags, to Stephen Dodge, Lorraine Jones and Kathy Marmet. Kathy has scheduled a planting party for March 27 at Fox Haven to plant these at the site chosen for their seed orchard. The growth of these seedlings over the summer will be an indicator of the appropriateness of the site for growing American chestnuts.

Barbara Knapp brought the 33 backcross nuts collected from one of her trees in Germantown, MD, as a result of the controlled pollination last July using GL367 pollen from Meadowview Farms. Barbara took 10, Burnie Burnworth took 10, and Stephen Dodge took 13 to plant in a small nursery inside the deer fence at ThorpeWood. Barbara, Burnie and Thorpe Wood have all signed the TACF Germplasm Agreement, so they may plant these nuts and grow the resulting seedlings on their property.

It was a very successful event, and several of the volunteers were new members of TACF. Membership brochures were handed out, and everyone was encouraged to join TACF.

