



# MARYLAND CHAPTER

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## Newsletter – March 2008

#### Chapter Officers:

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The Maryland Chapter supports the efforts of The American Chestnut Foundation to restore the American chestnut tree, identifies and preserves American chestnut survivors in Maryland and promotes educational and scientific research efforts directed at restoring American chestnut trees in Maryland.

#### MDTACF Spring Meeting

Friday, May 9, 2008

1 pm to 3 pm

Hood College Marx Center

#### **Dr. J. Hill Craddock: Chestnut Breeding in the Southeastern United States**

Dr. Craddock planted his first chestnut tree at age 12. He is a delightful person and a dynamic speaker, with a wealth of experience in various aspects of American chestnut restoration science. He is the Robert M. Davenport Associate Professor of Biology, Department of Biology and Environmental Sciences, University of Tennessee, Chattanooga.

A brief business meeting and light refreshments will follow Dr. Craddock's presentation.

#### **Sara Fitzsimmons: Restoration Efforts in the Mid-Atlantic Region**

Ms. Fitzsimmons is the TACF Northern Appalachian Regional Science Coordinator at Penn State University.

More about Dr. J. Hill Craddock:

<http://www.utc.edu/Faculty/Hill-Craddock/bio.html>

Chattanooga Chestnut Tree Project:

<http://www.utc.edu/Faculty/Hill-Craddock/index.html>

**Directions to Marx Center:** From US highway 15 in Frederick, exit onto Rosemont Ave. going east (left turn if coming from south). In about four blocks, you will see Hood College on your left. Turn left into campus on Martha Church Drive, the first possible left after the street angles slightly to the left at the main campus entrance. At the first stop sign, keep to the right of Brodbeck Hall. At the second stop sign, you will face a parking lot. Directly ahead of you to the north as you enter the lot is Coffman Chapel. The Marx Center is just north of the Chapel. You can park in this parking lot or find your way through the lot keeping to the right to a smaller parking lot immediately north of the Marx Center.

#### Receive Event Notices and Newsletters Online:

In order to conserve resources and communicate more efficiently, The MD-TACF would like to use email to send out information to members.

Please send an email with your name, email address and contact phone number to Betty Garrand, Membership Chair, at [BettyGarrand@aol.com](mailto:BettyGarrand@aol.com). Your privacy will be protected and our membership list is not shared with any outside organization.

The current newsletter is available in color at <http://www.mdtacf.org/NewsEvents/currentnewsletter.html>. In the future we hope to eliminate mailing to people who are able to receive the newsletter online. We use a listserv to send information about MDTACF events and new newsletter availability. Anyone is welcome to join the list, and we strongly encourage members and friends to sign up and keep addresses current.

You can add, delete or change your listserv information at: <http://mrs.gale.fates.org/mailman/listinfo/mdtacf>

## Preserving Our Native Chestnut Trees

Ron Kuipers

Preserving surviving native American chestnut trees is one of the listed goals in MD TACF's Master Plan. Not only do these trees provide a tangible link to the American chestnuts' past glory but they also contain germplasm that may be important to future recovery efforts.

There is at least anecdotal evidence that the need to actively protect the native survivors is becoming increasingly urgent. The explosive growth of Maryland's deer population in recent decades has caused severe over-browsing of vegetation, especially in suburban areas and parks where hunting is restricted. Previously, blighted trees were able to regenerate repeatedly by growing new shoots from their root collars. Deer over-browsing and antler-rubbing has severely reduced such regeneration in many areas.



*Fencing around a large survivor in Montgomery County. The fencing permits the growth of stump shoots that enable the tree to survive when the main trunk succumbs to blight.*

MD TACF has placed deer fences around all its orchards and has begun a program to fence many individual native trees to prevent deer browsing. Barbara Knapp, whose property contains the Montgomery County co-champion tree, has enclosed a large cluster of American chestnuts with a deer fence since 2006. The effect is dramatic. Within the fence there is a thick groundcover of many tree species, including numerous thriving sprouts from the root collars of blighted chestnut trees. Outside the fence, in the adjoining forest areas, the understory is nearly devoid of new growth.

Beginning in 2006, members of MD TACF have begun placing deer fences around surviving native chestnuts in other locations. So far, some 30 trees have been protected, mainly in Montgomery and Frederick counties. In some cases the parent tree has since died but the fencing has protected new sprouts that are likely to carry on the genes. Sprouts on nearby trees that were not fenced have been completely nipped off by deer leaving no prospect for the tree to create a new generation of offspring after it succumbs to the blight.



*Ron Kuipers and his good friend John Akerley have worked together on many chestnut projects, including Ron's efforts to protect stump shoots of large survivors from being eaten by deer.*

## Make a Difference - Become an Orchard Steward

Robert Strasser

As we look to the spring and the plans to expand upon our already large orchard network, it's clear we are in need of finding some regular hands on help with several locations. The orchard network of the Maryland Chapter of TACF has grown very quickly in just a few short years. This is a testament to our successes at conducting controlled pollinations, as well as to the hard work of those who have helped.



*Robert Strasser, Ron Kuipers, Kathy Marmet and Glenn Williams at the Monocacy orchard. Kuipers and Williams worked together during the 2007 season to provide stewardship for the Monocacy and WSSC orchards.*

While we have some great cooperators who provide regular maintenance, we are fortunate to have some dedicated members who make a big difference in others. During the 2007 growing season, on site care was provided by Glenn Williams, Ron Kuipers, Mark Grzeszkiewicz and the Horst family, among others. They have made it possible to grow trees well at orchards which have no regular maintenance staff. We greatly appreciate the contributions of these orchard stewards to our chapter, and the great growth and survival of our trees has a lot to do with the quality of their care.

The things we sometimes need help with are primarily planting; mowing and weed control, but include occasional

watering if it is too hot and dry. It's possible to help with and learn about controlled pollination, too. Stewards keep basic records of their activities and observations in log books, and need to keep an eye out for possible pest or disease issues, reporting them to regional scientists to know more about how and if to respond. There is a lot flexibility regarding when they must visit the sites, although typically its about twice a month between March and October. It's a great way to make a difference while enjoying getting outdoors.

Individuals or groups who feel a sense of commitment to chestnut restoration and can allocate a few hours a week during the growing season can make a really big difference to the success of our chapter's breeding program. Several sites need regular help beyond that which is currently available, including WMREC, Fox Haven, and Monocacy. If you or anyone you know are interested in becoming an orchard steward, please contact Robert Strasser or Kathy Marmet.



*The Myron Horst family lives at the site of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources Monocacy orchard, and has assisted in providing stewardship for the orchard.*

### **Help Celebrate TACF's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

*Kathy Marmet*

If you haven't already done so, be sure to read The Bark so that you are in the know about TACF's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary festivities. Also check the TACF website at [www.acf.org/anniversary25th.php](http://www.acf.org/anniversary25th.php) for new information.

MDTACF will be hosting the June 7<sup>th</sup> event at Harper's Ferry along with chapters from Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia. TACF is working with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) and the U.S. Park Service for the events at both the Appalachian Trail and the Harper's Ferry National Historic Park (NHP). Be sure not to miss either!

So far, the plans include TACF's display of American chestnut restoration information in a tent near the entry bus stop in the National Historic Park along with ATC and NHP displays. NHP leaders are making plans for cultural history demonstrations related to American chestnut, and Robert Strasser has agreed to prepare a lecture and slide show on American chestnut restoration and our efforts therein. We hope to confirm reports of American chestnut trees along the

Appalachian Trail, a short distance from Harpers Ferry. If we find such trees, we will offer guided chestnut identification hikes to NHC visitors.

The location for TACF's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary ceremony is the ATC headquarters up the hill from the NHP. Details and a VIP list for this event will be available soon on the [www.mdtacf.org](http://www.mdtacf.org) web site. Please mark the date on your calendar! If you'd like to help with the June 7<sup>th</sup> festivities, please send an email to [mdchapter@acf.org](mailto:mdchapter@acf.org).

Maryland volunteers are also actively involved in piloting an American Chestnut Project in contribution to the Appalachian Trail Mega-Transsect. The Meg-Transsect is a consortium of partners who are working together to engage the public in citizen science initiatives focused on indicators of environmental health of the Appalachian region. More information is available at [www.appalachiantrail.org](http://www.appalachiantrail.org).

Partners in the initial piloting of this project are the ATC, TACF and the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC), the largest Appalachian Trail maintenance organization ([www.potomacappalachian.org](http://www.potomacappalachian.org)). The goal is to collect data on American chestnut trees along the portion of the Appalachian Trail maintained by PATC volunteers. Bob Pickett of PATC is recruiting PATC volunteer data-collectors for the pilot project. In addition to the scientific value of the data collected, TACF will benefit from the increased chestnut awareness of participating PATC volunteers.

These PATC volunteers will receive training in both data collection techniques and identification of American chestnut, and will provide feedback to assist in refining the data collection process and training. The purpose is to develop a process that consistently produces reliable data without unduly burdening the volunteers participating in the collection.

MDTACF Board Member and forest ecologist Doug Boucher will lead the initial pilot training for the Meg-Transsect Chestnut Project. Bob Pickett from PATC and other TACF experts in chestnut identification will assist with the training as well while also learning the data collection process. In the future, they too will train other data collection volunteers.

If the pilot project is successful, the Mega-Transsect Chestnut Project will be extended to other parts of the trail. The intention is for this effort to become a multi-year project, providing important information about chestnut survival over time in the forest setting. Scientists and students will be able to compare data collected during the 2008 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year pilot project with similar data collected by thru-hiker Eric Wiese in 1999. More information about Eric Wiese's project is available at [www.acf.org/anniversary25th.php](http://www.acf.org/anniversary25th.php).

**Note: ADVANCE REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED AND SLOTS WILL FILL QUICKLY. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO HELP WITH THIS PROJECT, PLEASE CONTACT KATHY MARMET at [kathymarmet@gmail.com](mailto:kathymarmet@gmail.com) or 301-639-8491.**



## **TACF Long-range Planning Retreat February 16-18**

*Essie Burnworth*

Officers, Board members and other stake-holders were invited to Meadowkirk, a retreat center in Middleburg, Virginia, in the middle of February to participate in a brain-storming process to lay out plans for the Foundation as it enters its 25<sup>th</sup> year.

Up until now, the focus has been on the breeding program aimed at producing blight-resistant trees having the growth and wood characteristics of American chestnut. Though the research farms in Meadowview, Virginia are beginning to produce “6<sup>th</sup>-generation” nuts, the scientists assure us that we are not “done.” Further backcrossing, additional lines of resistance, and perhaps other approaches uncovered through several current genetic engineering projects, will lead us toward our ultimate American chestnut products. But in the meantime, we must broaden our efforts and begin to think about the “restoration” part of our mission.

To stimulate people to think about the future and its challenges, a detailed questionnaire was sent out in advance. The responses were amazing in their creativity, thoughtfulness, and in the passion for our work reflected in the answers. Thirty-one participants gathered on a beautiful weekend and addressed our vision for 100 years from now in terms of 1) what would the American chestnut product be, 2) what does restoration mean, 3) what is the most effective governance model to follow, and finally 4) how do we best raise the funds to accomplish our goals.

Working in small groups, and circulating through all the topics, each person was able to offer ideas and refine them into consensus views, milestones, and challenges. Our sessions were expertly guided by a wonderful facilitator, Kay Quam of Reston, Virginia. By the end of the weekend, the group was upbeat, enthusiastic about the collective view we had formulated for our future, and beginning to work in tiger teams to start the detailed planning. The retreat ended with a Board meeting that recommended that we take the next steps at our next Board and Cabinet meetings on April 4-6 in Pittsburg.

The discussions were lively, and there was plenty of humor. As we talked about all the external events that could influence the next 200 years and the advances that could contribute to our American chestnut product, Dr. Al Ellingboe, the TACF Science Advisor spoke up and said, “Eventually, something will work!” That captured the mood of the group. We agreed that we would strive for purity in producing a chestnut that is as nearly identical to the chestnuts of 100 years ago as possible, but what we really want is to produce a chestnut that can reproduce on its own and continue its evolution in the forests.

The importance of preserving the remaining American chestnuts in the wild was emphasized. They are gradually disappearing and we should not forget to keep planting and nurturing American chestnuts to preserve the germplasm with which ultimately our breeding product will be enriched.

It also became apparent that we need to turn our attention to restoration now. Each chapter will develop its own restoration plan, following a model from the Science Cabinet. An emerging idea that was discussed a lot was that we would not attempt to plant the millions of seed necessary for restoration but rather we would distribute plots over the entire range, and potential chestnut range, that would contain a critical mass of chestnut trees such that they could form bridges into the forests nearby. These plots would in effect jump-start the spread of viable, blight-resistant trees back into the wild. This concept will be further refined by the Science Cabinet this spring.

It was also agreed that we need to articulate a “restoration story” with which to educate the public and gain support for the enormous amount of research and silviculture efforts ahead. In the past, our story has been about the breeding and has been fairly easy to tell; now we are beginning to get the nuts with which to go forward, and we need to shift the attention of our members and the public to a longer term and somewhat elusive goal of “restoration.”

This brings up the possibilities offered by the intermediate nuts that are a natural byproduct of the breeding program. Even though we are not ready to say they are the ultimate product, these nuts can allow people to gain experience growing chestnut, and we can learn about their survival rates. The possibility even came up of producing food products with some surplus nuts from the breeding program. Greg Miller of Ohio, one of the largest chestnut growers said his motto was, “Plant the best and eat the rest!”

Fundraising was a critical topic as we acknowledged the resources needed to realize our vision. Science research requirements are expected to grow 10-15% a year for the net decade at least; seed orchards and these large critical mass plots have to be designed, planned and established throughout the range. Partnerships and opportunities for sponsorship of seed orchard trees were discussed, and there was agreement that full-time development staff should be hired for the Foundation as a whole. In time, perhaps regional fundraising staff would be appropriate.

### **Help Plant Chestnut Orchards!**

Planting season is underway, with plantings planned in more than a dozen locations, including three schools and test plantings of sixth generation backcross seeds at ThorpeWood.

For a schedule of planting events and locations visit [www.mdtaf.org/NewsEvents/currentevents.html](http://www.mdtaf.org/NewsEvents/currentevents.html)

If you'd like to help, contact Essie Burnworth at [mdchapter@acf.org](mailto:mdchapter@acf.org) or call (301) 762-6715 or call Robert Strasser (240) 285-8199