

Spring Growers Meeting

Date: Saturday, April 2 2016

Time: 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Cost: \$10 at door for lunch/coffee

Location:

Dauphin County Conservation District
1451 Peters Mountain Rd., Dauphin, PA

Please RSVP by 3/31/2016

mail@patacf.org or 814-863-7192

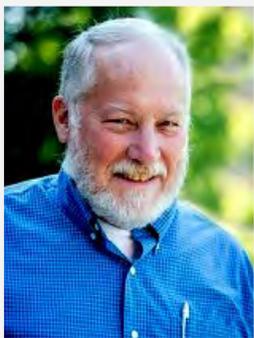


Meeting Program

8:30 –9:30 am	Social Hour (coffee and donuts)
9:30— 9:45 am	Opening Comments: John Wenderoth, Board President
9:45—11:00 am	Dr. Kim Steiner Presentation / Q & A
11:00-12:15 pm	Lisa Thomson Presentation / Q & A
12:15– 1:15 pm	Lunch (Please RSVP)
1:15– 2:00 pm	Dr. William Powell Presentation / Q & A
2:00 pm	Adjourn for Nut & Grower Supply Distribution

Feature Speakers

Dr. Kim Steiner — Professor of Forest Biology, PSU; Chair of The American Chestnut Foundation



“Where Are We with TACF’s Backcross Breeding Program?”

Lisa Thomson — President & CEO of The American Chestnut Foundation



“Moving Forward Together”

Dr. William A. Powell — Professor of Biotechnology, SUNY Co-Director of the American Chestnut Research & Restoration Project



“Using the Tools of Genetic Engineering to Help Save the American Chestnut”



President's Corner

Generating Greater Awareness

It seems like yesterday that I read Susan Freinkel's book ("American Chestnut: The Life, Death, and Re-birth of a Perfect Tree), and shortly thereafter, discovered that Tyler Arboretum (located near my home in Delaware County) needed volunteers to care for an existing seed-production orchard. As a relative newcomer to the restoration efforts of The American Chestnut

Foundation, I've progressed through six seasons with the support and encouragement of the arboretum's staff and Sara Fitzsimmons, our Regional Science Coordinator. That period was the source of my "re-awareness."

Maintenance of Tyler's orchard is now carried on by a dependable and ever-more knowledgeable crew of volunteers, who are familiar with story of the American chestnut's demise and program for its restoration. And I've been able to share the "chestnut story" with visitors, other volunteer workers, and staff members at the arboretum. After a few seasons, I was honored to join our chapter's board, but that expanded sense of involvement has made it even clearer that the public has largely forgotten the American chestnut and its contribution to our nation's economic development. Consider this concise statement in Eric Rutkow's recent book "American Canopy: Trees, Forests, and the Making of a Nation":

"The seemingly endless utility of the American chestnut made it perhaps the nation's most important tree species by the beginning of the twentieth century. The lumber industry was cutting above a billion board feet of chestnut timber per year, the highest amount of any single hardwood species. Americans rode on chestnut-paneled trains running along chestnut rail ties to reach jobs behind chestnut desks to receive messages transmitted over chestnut utility poles. They dined on chestnut stuffing at chestnut tables while wearing leather clothes tanned with chestnut. In 1915, Buttrick noted: 'At last when the tree can serve us no longer in any other way it forms the basic wood onto which oak and other woods are veneered to make our coffins.' From cradle to the grave, then, the chestnut tree affected almost every phase of life. If something were to happen to this inimitable species, America would be forever altered."

Through breeding for disease resistance, we can overcome the loss of chestnuts in our forests, but it will take time. We must keep the memory of this magnificent tree from fading by promoting the awareness of its significant role in our nation's history.

Your decision to become a TACF member is an important first step. Our membership numbers in recent years have been stable but haven't been growing, and we face the potential for our support to decline as our population ages and the memory of the chestnuts in our forests fades. Even as we work to recruit new members at outreach events, **renewing your membership is vital. Share the chestnut story with friends and consider giving gift memberships to relatives, especially those receptive members of the younger generation, who can carry that memory forward.**

Sincerely,

John Wenderoth

PA-TACF Board of Directors

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jhwend@yahoo.com

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Jmn173@psu.edu

Chapter News

Member Spotlight—Les Nichols

By Jean Najjar, Chapter Administrator

Les Nichols grew up in a rural community in Hunterdon County New Jersey and as a youth he enjoyed working on neighboring farms, doing whatever work was in season. He believes that he got more pleasure from this labor than his friends who actually grew up on farms. As the saying goes, “the grass is always greener.” Les also found time for another passion early in his life, hunting and fishing. He attributes these pastimes and his rural upbringing with his early interest in forests and nature. He knew this was where he wanted to be and the seed was planted for his future.

The years went by and after a stint in the Marines, Les returned to New Jersey to settle in Warren County and work for the phone company. This was a good fit for Les, giving him the opportunity to spend time in the outdoors. His work took him throughout Warren and Sussex Counties and while on the road he spent a good bit of time observing nature and the impacts of development.

In 1984, he purchased plot of land with plans to develop a timber lot. In our conversation, he laughed at his own naivety in those early years. He had thought his years of farm experience and knowledge of the woods gained from hunting and fishing would be enough. But his experience and passion hadn't quite prepared him for the task ahead. There was a big learning curve the first five years, as he struggled with

drought, pests, and all that he didn't know to get his young seedlings growing. He often felt like he was going one on one with Mother Nature at that time.

As Les continued to work and learn about forestry, he observed the negative impact that invasive plant species were having on local woodlands. He joined the Pohatcong Environmental Commission which was studying these impacts in Warren County. And from the book, “Vegetation of New Jersey” by Beryl Robichaud and Murray F. Buell, Les learned from this that his land was once made up of several species of native oak and chestnuts. Les decided he would work to reestablish this native forest on one third of his land.



Above: Les Nichols and his grandson Aaron Radeck, age 9, stand by an American chestnut started from seed collected from a stand in the Atlantic Highlands.

In 2004, PA-TACF initiated several projects in New Jersey including establishing orchards in with the Morris County Parks Department. Les attended a meeting organized by Bob Summersgill and he was hooked. In 2014 Les helped establish the first progeny test location in New Jersey, Lord Stirling Park. We are grateful to Les for all his efforts on our behalf: growing chestnuts, tabling at outreach events and most recently looking to establish an educational planting at the Pohatcong Elementary School.

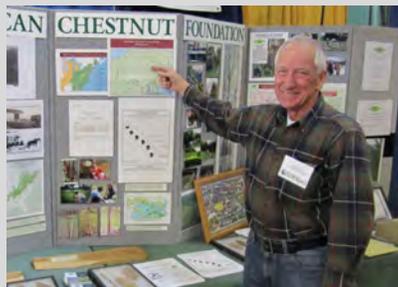
Members Remembered: Gladden Gingerich and Donald Franks

Our Chapter honors the memory of two dedicated supporters who past away in 2015.



Gladden Gingerich was involved with some of the earliest crosses made by Mary and Bob Leffel back in the mid-90s. In fact one of the earliest crosses made for our Chapter was on trees planted by Gladden, the Gingerich tree, code GiYo. He was dedicated to our mission, he included a request in his will that an advanced generation American chestnut be planted at or near his grave. A ceremonial planting is now being reviewed for this site.

We also want to remember **Donald Franks** of Lancaster, PA, who passed away from complications with prostate cancer back in November. Like many of our members he was a high energy soul who loved the outdoors --climbing a 14,000-foot mountain peak at age 72. He joined PA-TACF in 1997 and was always an enthusiastic member and dedicated volunteer leading the charge on a variety of projects to help restore the American chestnut. We will miss his passion and joyful perspective.



Join the PA/NJ Chapter Facebook Group!

Join this new forum and help build a community of support for the restoration of the American chestnut. This Group is different from our Facebook page because it is a platform for members and supporters to share photos, questions, stories, and books like the one on the left directly with other members and supporters.

www.facebook.com/groups/PA.TACF/

It is a closed group so you must send a request to join. That helps us to control spam and those with other agendas. **See you there!**

Chapter News — 2015 TACF Annual Meeting Highlights

PA/NJ Chapter Board Awards Scholarship

Ethan Hollamby was awarded a scholarship by the PA/NJ Chapter for the purpose of attending the 2016 Annual Meeting in State College. You may remember Ethan from our Fall 2015 newsletter as he was featured in our Member Spotlight. He has been a member of our Chapter for several years even though he is still in high school. The scholarship grant included conference registration for Ethan and his father, and one night stay at the Conference center. His mother and sister registered for the conference on their own and the family attended all the presentations.

PA-TACF is committed to seeking new avenues for encouraging young people to engage in our mission. No formal scholarship fund has been established, but the Board will continue to review recommendations and requests and they look toward opening opportunities to the next generation.

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Above: Front row: Hollamby Family; Back row: Jean Najjar, John Wenderoth, and Sara Fitzsimmons. On the Right: Ethan Hollamby in his garden.

American Chestnut Tree Days Declared!

Coinciding with the TACF Annual Meeting being held in Pennsylvania, two proclamations were made to recognize the value of the American chestnut and the important work of our organization.

Governor Thomas Wolf proclaimed October 24th as American Chestnut Day in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and Mayor Elizabeth Goreham proclaimed October 23rd American Chestnut Day in State College.

We promoted these days through social media and Governor Wolf's proclamation was read by Lisa Thompson at the Annual Meeting. Read the proclamation on our website.



Many thanks the State College restaurants that helped us mark the day by featuring chestnuts as an ingredient.

Fasta & Ravioli Co.
Harrison's Wine Grill & Catering
Spats Café
Webster's Bookstore & Café



Above First Row: Women of TACF; Sara Fitzsimmons, Tracey Coulter, Elizabeth Brantley, Lisa Thompson, and Kendra Collins; Second Row: John Wenderoth and attendees on PSU Orchard Tour, Jean Najjar, Mary and Blair Carbaugh, Tim Eck at Friday Night Banquet, Third Row: Sara Fitzsimmons, Parker Fitzsimmons, Alvin Jackson, Maureen Burnham, Rebecca Hirsch, Susan Smith

Chapter News — Kicking Off 2016

Board Election

There were 146 ballots cast in our 2015 Board of Director's Election. The ballots have been counted and tallied. All of the nominees have been duly elected into office. Please join us in welcoming our new members.

**Mary Ayres
Rick Hartlieb
Robert Lingenfelter
Randy Santoro**

Many thanks to all our Board Members for their commitment and dedication!

2015 Fall Fundraising Goal Exceeded!

Members showed their support in 2015 with generous contributions to our **End of Year Fundraiser**. The goal was to raise \$2,500 for the purchase of assorted tools for the Orchard Manager and additional educational materials.



We raised \$4,780

Thank you to all of our generous donors!

Kicking Off 2016 at the PA Farm Show

The PA Farm Show celebrated its 100 Anniversary this past January and PA/NJ TACF was proud to participate. Thanks to the DCNR Bureau of Forestry we were able to display historic lantern slide images



Fay and Sheiva Ansary (sisters) talking to attendees

of the Paragon Chestnut Orchard. You may have read about these images in the Summer 2015 issue of *Chestnut* — *The New Journal of The American Chestnut Foundation*. In the article titled, “The Paragon Chestnut:

Pedigree and History,” author William Lord, tells the story of chestnut cultivation in Pennsylvania and the important place that the Paragon nut played before being wiped out by the blight.

Chris Ditlow donated over a dozen beautiful cutting boards that were sold as a fundraiser for our Chapter. Through this and the sale of other merchandise, we raised over **\$1,000**. More importantly 16 new members joined our chapter!



Right: Don McCann, Marian Keegan, Eric Ulrich and Fred Heagy

Many thanks to Chris Ditlow, the DCNR Bureau of Forestry, and all of the volunteers (new faces and old hands) at the Farm Show.

We are off to a great start in 2016!

Many thanks to our Farm Show Volunteers!

Fay Ansary
Sheiva Ansary
Dave Armstrong
Mary Ayres
Marilyn Baughman
Clark Beebe
Tim Eck
Jim Egenrieder
Lake Graboski

Fred Heagy
Bruce Heindel
Alvin Jackson
Marian Keegan
Peter Lane
Don McCann
Catherine Beller Meinhart
Michael Peterson
Steve and Jennifer Schoonover

Susan Smith
Eric S Ulrich
Hannah Weeden
Larry Yozwiak
Gary Schubert
Chris Ditlow
Kathryn Kerr
John Delaney
Tom Trimbur

Phytophthora cinnamomi Isolated from Chestnuts in Pennsylvania

By Sara Fern Fitzsimmons,
Regional Science Coordinator TACF

During the growing seasons of 2014 and 2015, two PA/NJ orchard locations were stricken with unexplained death of plants. The managers of these two locations contacted our Penn State office, and were directed to ship samples to Penn State's disease diagnostic lab.

The results were both unexpected and alarming – *Phytophthora cinnamomi* (*Pc*), the causal agent of ink rot disease, also called *Phytophthora* root rot (PRR), was isolated. Prior to those isolations, PRR had only been found on TACF orchards south of the PA/MD border. It was only a matter of time before this deadly disease would find its way north.

Unlike chestnut blight, a disease from which chestnuts can bounce back through resprouting, PRR destroys the roots, fully killing susceptible tree. Unfortunately, all American chestnuts appear to be highly susceptible to PRR.

Why now? Several members of the TACF science staff have discussed why *Pc* is now being found in PA chestnut orchard. *Pc* will usually be kept at bay by cold temperatures, and we had plenty of those in the winters of 2013 and 2014. But what we also had was plenty of snow cover, which appears to have insulated the ground. This may have kept the soils from freezing hard enough to kill most *Pc* organisms. Will the warm winter so far exacerbate the problem? Or will we get hard enough freezes through spring to kill off what might be there? We shall see.

Do not panic! There are many things that can cause chestnuts to die, especially in the first year. If you suspect a disease may be affecting the health of your trees, the best way to identify the cause is to send in a sample for analysis. Gather as much information about the culture of the trees as possible to accompany the sample: when the trees were planted, if they were planted as seeds or seedlings, location of planting, soil type, how much water they've been getting, what sort of fertilization/herbicides may have been used, etc., etc. The more information you can provide, the better.

The diagnostic lab at Penn State gives first priority to those samples that come in from a county extension agent, so the first step is to contact your county extension agent. They will work with you to put together the necessary forms and ensure the samples are properly prepared. For effective diagnosis of *Phytophthora* organisms, the sample must be fresh. The tree must be dying, but not yet dead. Extreme browning of the leaves (Figure 1) is a good indication of a root problem, which may be *Phytophthora*.

Although PRR is a lethal on American chestnut, and as of yet impossible to remove from chestnut orchards, it can be managed. Proper diagnosis is the key to overcoming PRR and other pest, disease, or cultural issues. Some land grant universities offer plant disease diagnosis for free to in-state residents (i.e. Penn State) while others cost money (i.e. Rutgers at \$40 / sample). If sending in a sample is cost-prohibitive, consult with your local county extension agent and TACF Regional Coordinator. Again, the more information you can gather regarding growing conditions, the better able we are to get a proper diagnosis, with or without a sample.

To find your local extension agent in Pennsylvania, consult this website <http://extension.psu.edu/counties>. In New Jersey: <http://njaes.rutgers.edu/county/>



Signs of significant root distress in chestnut. The roots of these trees tested positive for *Phytophthora cinnamomi*. Pictures Courtesy Nathan Briggs

View From the Orchard

Challenges and Rewards of Starting Tree Seedlings in the Greenhouse

By Steve Hoy, Orchard Manager, PA/NJ TACF



As the snow falls and temperatures hang below freezing, it's difficult to think of planting trees anytime soon. Fortunately, greenhouses provide an opportunity for growers to get a head start on the growing season --

giving tree seedlings a competitive edge in the spring. While starting trees in the greenhouse offers huge advantages, it is not without its complications and the greenhouses at Penn State are no exception. Beginning 2 years ago, seeds planted in the greenhouse were stunted, chlorotic, and generally stressed within 3 months of being planted. Several factors contributed to the symptoms that weren't immediately clear. Water tests concluded that the pH was over 8.3 with an alkalinity over 250. Normal ranges are 6.0-7.5 and 80-100, respectively. To remedy this, sulfuric acid is injected into the irrigation system to bring the pH into the range of 5.5-6.0. This creates a more favorable environment for the chestnut seedlings, which prefer soils between 4.5 and 6.5.

As the seedling health began to improve, a new issue arose:

aphids. When watering chestnut seedlings, small clouds of the insect could be seen flying away. The aphids themselves do not cause seedlings much harm. Aphids primarily feed on the phloem layer beneath the bark, sucking nutrients out of plant tissue, but it would take a very significant population to result in damage to the seedling. However, they are also a vector for disease, so it is important to control these bugs. Rapid reproduction makes constant monitoring an essential part of a pest management plan. Early identification and action, typically using insecticidal soap, will keep the population low until seedlings are moved outside where natural predators will aid in management.

Staying vigilant for pests and other signs of stress, as well as adapting, implementing, and improving water and fertilizer programs ensure continued improvement in seedlings to be planted in the seed orchard here at Penn State and the surrounding area.



Left: Chestnut seedlings. Right: Intern, Ethan Mansfield, potting up seedlings in the Forest Resource Lab greenhouse at PSU.

Chestnuts in the Kitchen

Penn Stater Recipe Served at TACF Annual Meeting



The Penn Stater Conference Center put out a fabulous spread for attendees at TACF's Annual Meeting.

The menus included several items featuring chestnuts. Here is a recipe for spiced chestnuts that can be added to vegetables or salads. Executive Chef Kenneth Stout mixed these chestnuts into a side of spaghetti squash and asparagus. It was delicious!



Spiced Chestnuts

2 tbsp. Honey
1/2 cup Sugar
1 cup Chestnuts
1/2 tsp Seasoning Blend* –adjust to your liking
Toss all ingredients together and spread out on an oiled pan; Bake in a pre-heated 375 degree oven for approx. 10 minutes or until lightly browned/caramelized
Let cool and sprinkle over your favorite Vegetable or Salad

Seasoning Blend (This seasoning mix also works well on meats and poultry before grilling and or smoking)

Mix all Seasonings together
2 tbsp. Kosher Salt
1/4 tsp Cayenne Pepper
1 tsp Garlic Powder
2 tsp Onion Powder
1 tbsp. Paprika
2 tsp Dry Mustard
1/2 tsp White Pepper (GROUND)
1/2 tsp Black Pepper (GROUND)





The Chestnut Newsletter

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Pennsylvania Chapter

The American Chestnut Foundation

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SELECT UPCOMING EVENTS

- * **February 26— Growers School Reunion:** Mercer Co. Cooperative Extension Office in Mercer, PA
- * **April 2— PA/NJ TACF Spring Growers Meeting,** Dauphin County Conservation Dist., Dauphin, PA
- * **April 23—Chestnut Growers School with Gary Micky:** Lake Erie Regional Grape Research Facility, North East, PA
- * **April 30—Lancaster Native Plant and Wildlife Festival,** Manheim Township Public Library
- * **June 15-17— Native Plants in the Landscape Conference,** Millersville University, Millersville PA
- * **August 6-7—Festival of Woods at Grey Towers,** Milford, PA
- * **August 16-18— Penn State Ag Progress Days,** Russell E. Larson Ag Research Center, Rock Springs, PA
- * **September 10-11 — New Jersey Wild Outdoor Expo,** Colliers Mills Wildlife Management Area in Jackson Township, NJ
- * **October 29 — Fall Member Meeting,** Conrad Weiser Conservation District Bldg., Aristes PA



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