

Canadian Chestnut Council (CCC)

... on the Chestnut Trail

Rural Route # 1
Orangeville, ON., L9W 2Y 8

Rec'd.
Dec. 8/99

NEWSLETTER # 21
November 1999

The NEWSLETTER of the CANADIAN CHESTNUT COUNCIL (CCC):

The CCC is a charitable organization concluding its twelfth year. Since its inception membership has tripled. In other areas it has shown evidence of strong growth.

The Newsletter has attempted to be a memory of the Council's activities and achievements. It also tries to keep readers informed of its future.

Because the written word may not always be adequate, the CCC annual meeting held every autumn, strives to arouse interest in why this once important forest tree should be restored.

Hopefully through two publicity channels the concerns and the needs of the chestnut enthusiasts are met.

Let our motto be - alone each of us can do a little - together we can do much more!

Colin D. McKeen
Editor

LETTERS to the EDITOR:

Dear Mr. McKeen:

Your name was given to me by Mr. Otto Grundmann. I am interested in growing chestnuts. I don't know much about growing them, but Mr. Grundmann said you had good information. I would like a membership in your council.

Sincerely,
Diana McKay, Terrace, B.C.

Reply correspondence has been mailed.

Mr. Grundmann, of Terrace, B.C. is a member of the CCC. A few years ago he obtained chestnut seedlings from a nursery in Ontario. The Editor

Don Price,
Guelph, ON.

Recently became a member of the CCC. He informed Council that he knows the location of two mature chestnut trees growing in the southern part of Bruce County. The trees have circumferences at breast height of 48 and 67 inches.

Response:

A reasonable estimate is that these trees may have been planted 30 - 40 years ago. A follow-up is being undertaken on the source of the trees. The Editor.

The Canadian Chestnut Council

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LETTERS to the EDITOR (cont'd):

Wm. Stewart,
Uphill, ON.

Regrets that he was unable to attend the annual meeting. He reports success with his planting of 90 chestnut seedlings in 1996. After 3 seasons of growth he reports more than 70% survival.

Because he has one of the largest plantings, well beyond the 'Old Chestnut Belt', he commented upon the latitude of three of the most northern plantings as follows:

Ottawa - 45.30° latitude

Uphill - 44.45° latitude

Orangeville - 44.00° latitude.

In a report published in the Canadian Field Naturalist by Sherwood Fox in 1949, the northern limit of the natural range of chestnut in Ontario was given as 43.31° latitude. The Editor.

Stacey Pollard,
Lisle, ON

Proudly announced finding 4 small chestnut trees growing at a site a few kilometers southwest of Camp Borden near Angus, ON in Simcoe County. The largest tree has a dbh of 6 inches (20 cm) and a height of about 26 feet (8m).

The trees have been confirmed as true *Castanea dentata*. A few burrs were found at the base of the largest tree, but none contained plump nuts. These trees are close enough to be cross pollinated freely. Perhaps in a few years they may provide a good source of seed. The Editor.

12th ANNUAL MEETING (CCC):

The annual meeting held at the Research Station near Simcoe on Sept. 25 pleased attendees.

The program started at 10.00 AM with a field trip by bus planned by Mike Nemerowski and Steve Scheers. At Ken Husul's woodlot the group feasted their eyes on a fine healthy 18" (45cm) dbh chestnut tree. It was a canopy-maker with a height of more than 70' (23m).

At Doug Grundry's property a 12" (30cm) double-stemmed tree growing in a fence row at road side was seen. This tree had been control-pollinated and the seeds were being harvested.

Berchlag's seed orchard contained a mixed planting of American chestnut and White pine. Many of the young chestnut trees showed a current season terminal growth of 30"(75cm). Ideal growing conditions prevailed!

12th ANNUAL MEETING (cont'd):

A final stop on the tour showed a roadside specimen displaying the characteristic symptoms of a hypovirulent blight infection. The tree had also been control-pollinated and seeds were being harvested.

The afternoon session consisted of a more formal indoor program. Doug McKeen introduced the 'Time Capsule' project -- explained its purpose and urged people to contribute stories, etc. that would guide and help directors at a future date. (See enclosed form)

Dr. Sandra Anagnostakis of the Agricultural Experimental Station, New Haven, CT. was the guest speaker. She charmed the audience with an exceptionally informative and interesting presentation. Her lantern slides illustrated many aspects of the chestnut and its long and continuing struggle with the blight.

Dr. Arthur Langford, a well-known naturalist in the Norfolk area, moved a hearty vote of thanks to the speaker. She was presented with a clock mounted on a nicely designed stand of chestnut wood.

Dr. Greg Boland updated members on the progress of the COSEWIC committee working on a recovery plan for chestnut. He also reported that the CCC website was up and running and he invited people to visit the site and to refer any comments to him.

Ross Pamenter, our secretary-treasurer, makes ornamental objects from chestnut wood. This feature was clearly demonstrated in the memento given to Dr. Anagnostakis, and also the prizes given to those who had contributed to the computer listing of the chestnut plantings in Ontario. Prizes went to Dr. J. Shaw (London), Gord Miller (North Bay), and Wm. Stewart (Uphill).

A short business session terminated the program at 4:00 PM.

CHESTNUT OUTPLANTINGS in SOUTHERN ONTARIO:

Our CCC database reveals that there have been 273 outplantings to date. Nearly all of them have been made during the last decade. These plantings now occur in 37 of the southern Ontario's 44 counties. In the 14 'Old Belt' counties (those bordering on or near Lake Erie and the west end of Lake Ontario) there have been 183 plantings. In northern and eastern counties there have been 90 plantings. Although several of the plantings are small (fewer than six trees), they are significant for they are demonstrating that the American chestnut is capable of growing well beyond what has been considered to be its natural range.

Since some of these sites might contain trees with hybrid germplasm, interesting facts may be gleaned from the survivors about cold hardiness qualities.

HISTORICAL BUILDINGS FEATURING CHESTNUT:

There are many buildings, public and residential, in Ontario containing chestnut. Chestnut timbers constitute structural members in some; in others chestnut may have been used as finishing materials (wainscoting, staircases, balustrades, casings of doors and windows and other trim).

Council has felt it significant to develop a database of site locations of public buildings displaying such features. (See enclosed form)

ANNUAL MEETING of TACF:

The Annual Meeting of the American Chestnut Foundation was held October 15 - 17, 1999 at the Atwood Lake Resort and Conference Center in Ohio. In addition to the regular proceedings a visit was made to the Empire Chestnut Company's orchard and nursery. This is one of the few large commercial operations in the US. The owners have been planting and evaluating six species of *Castanea* and several hybrids in a program of operations begun in 1980.

CCC directors, Bruce Graham and Clem Fisher attended the meeting. They returned with enthusiasm about what they heard and saw.

1999 CONSERVATION AWARD to CCC:

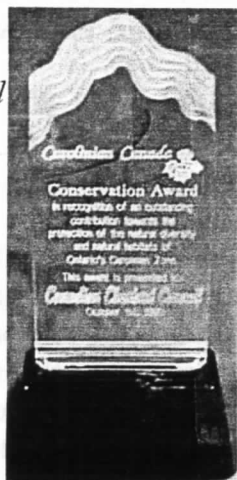
At a banquet held at Ridgetown College of Agricultural Technology on Oct. 1/99 Carolinian Canada presented its first Conservation Award. The recipient was the Canadian Chestnut Council. Dr. Colin D. McKeen accepted the award on behalf of the Council. He then briefly explained the main thrust of the Council to restore the American chestnut. The accompanying notation gives details of the reasoning behind the award.

Carolinian Canada

Conservation Award

In recognition of an outstanding contribution towards the protection of the natural diversity and natural habitats of Ontario's Carolinian Zone

This award is presented to:
Canadian Chestnut Council
October 1st, 1999



Carolinian Canada



1999 Conservation Award – Organization

Canadian Chestnut Council

Few of us that work in the natural environment settings in the Carolinian zone of Ontario do not know the tragic effect of the importation of the foreign Chestnut Blight on our native chestnut. From being a major forest component and one of the most useful and versatile trees of our forest, the native north American chestnut disappeared from the map in a matter of 30 years. A few landowners have made attempts to save or revive the chestnut but the blight was unforgiving and allowed only a very few isolated trees to grow to a size that could bear fruit. To some that was a challenge waiting to be conquered

Through the last ten years, members of the Canadian Chestnut Council have been involved in activities such as the collection of seed and growing seedlings, testing disease control methods, using "hypo virulent" strains, outplanting hundreds of seedlings for observation and preservation of the gene pools, sponsoring scientific research, maintaining accurate records of healthy and diseased trees and most of all keeping interested citizens informed through newsletters and public meetings about this magnificent tree that used to be such an important part of our Carolinian forests and the lives of our rural citizens. Every year new trees are being found even though many are still dying from the disease. The Canadian Chestnut Council is making a difference by giving us hope for at least a partial recovery of a major natural component of our forest.

Presentation of the Award

From left, Paul Smith, Chair of Carolinian Canada; Dolf Wynia, Ontario Forestry Association; Dr. and Mrs. McKeen accepting the award; Don Gordon, Program Coordinator.



The CCC is duly grateful for this recognition.
(See Carolinian Canada Nov. '99 Newsletter for further details of the award.)

CHESTNUT DEMONSTRATION PLANTING SITES:

Restoration of the American Chestnut - Farm Response to a Species at Risk

Andrew Graham, Program Advisor

Twenty-four demonstration sites have been successfully planted on farms across Ontario to draw attention to the threatened American chestnut tree. The response to this invitation has been overwhelming. Landowners, a variety of government agencies, and many environmental organizations have been extremely interested and supportive. The involvement of the Grand River Conservation Authority in supplying technical guidance and the chestnut seedling stock has been instrumental to the project's success. Local assistance at the planting sites has been contributed by Conservation Authorities and Stewardship Councils.

Fourteen of the planting sites are within the 'chestnut belt' in Southern Ontario. The remaining 10 sites are beyond the original range of the American chestnut.

Details of the overall project and each individual site are being compiled on a dedicated portion of the OSCIA web site. Look it up at: www.ontariosoilcro.org/AmericanChestnut.htm

Funding support is supplied by: Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's National Soil and Water Conservation Program administered by the Agricultural Adaptation Council and the Ontario Farm Environmental Coalition; Wildlife Habitat Canada; Natural Resources Canada through the Canadian Forest Service; and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. (*Excerpts taken from OSCIA News, November 1999*)

The Canadian Chestnut Council has had an input into the location and selection of sites for the plantings. The performance of chestnuts in these plantings will supplement the information being obtained for previous plantings made by the Council. Growers participating in the project and those desiring to participate but could not be accepted at this time are to be congratulated on this forward-looking challenge.

THE AMERICAN CHESTNUT FOUNDATION (TACF):

The fall issue of 'The Bark' outlines the activities and concerns of TACF and its state branches (chapters). In addition to New York, Connecticut, Indiana and Pennsylvania, Maine entered full chapter status in Oct.'99. North and South Carolina achieved provisional status and hope to receive full status in 2000. Massachusetts reports holding two chapter start-up meetings.

Reasons given for the cultivation of such a strong chapter status is to preserve the gene pool of the American chestnut throughout its natural range. Chapter activities maximize resources at the local level and promote the mission of restoring the American chestnut.

The Connecticut chapter benefits from the longest chestnut breeding program in the U.S. It is centred at the Connecticut Agricultural Experimental Station, New Haven, CT. The Graves chestnut hybrid was developed there by the middle of this century. It is one of the trees used in the backcross breeding start-up program at TACF's Meadowview research Farms in Virginia.

"It is of interest to note the great emphasis that is being placed on the education of students in elementary schools about the restoration program. Perhaps no more solid footing could be used in chapter plans than that of imparting the idea of restoration of the chestnut in the minds of the youth" -- editor's comment.

During the past summer the blight-resistance breeding program centred at the Meadowview Research Farms was reviewed by a competent team of experts. The three-man team examined the program in depth. The complexity and enormity of the program being undertaken was thoroughly appreciated. The review report praised the program in its entirety and approved the execution.

A few recommendations were offered in areas where it was judged that the program required strengthening.

In general the review was a strong endorsement of the backcross breeding program.

(*Excerpts taken from the Science Cabinet Chair report in the fall issue of 'The Bark'.*)

BREEDING CHESTNUT for BLIGHT RESISTANCE:

The directorship of the Canadian Chestnut Council is in the early stage for its launch of a blight-resistant breeding program. It will require a long-term plan necessitating much hard work and patient endurance.

The breeding of forest trees has been virtually ignored in Canada because of its high cost and long term requirement. The occurrence of the devastating blight fungus in chestnut this century has forced scientists to change their attitude. The potential for breeding blight-resistant types opens up new vistas.

In Canadian agriculture, several cereal and other crops have been returned to bounteous, high yielding, disease-resistant types through plant breeding. One has only to recall the ominous threat caused by rusts early in this century in prairie cereals to realize what plant breeder/pathologist teams have accomplished. The same scientific mechanisms for restoration can be applied to chestnut.

Whereas one or two generations of cereals such as wheat can be produced in a breeding program in a single year, it takes a minimum of four to five years to produce a single generation in chestnut breeding.

This brings up the question of sustainable funding!

Because chestnut blight had almost completely thwarted the efforts of scientists to bring the devastating blight under control, the U.S. government terminated nearly all its funding on the control of the blight in the early 1950's. In hindsight, this was not a good time to close down the research effort for within two decades there were new promises of blight control.

When TACF was established in 1983, the founders showed wisdom in that they were adamant that a more secure source of funding was necessary to carry the thrust of a blight-resistant breeding program. They turned to a receptive public audience that responded. In large measure it has been this public response that has centered the promising breeding program at Meadowview, Virginia.

About a decade ago the Wagner sisters bequeathed an 80-acre farm to TACF for the chestnut project. Five or so years later, the nearby Glen C. Price family donated a 100-acre farm to the effort. On these two farms TACF administrators and research staff are advancing their blight-resistant breeding program. Other benefactors have donated monies, farm equipment, etc. This is the kind of dedication that is required today to return a threatened hardwood tree species to the biosphere.

The CCC is now at a point where it requires secure funding to advance its program. We hope that Canada may be as successful as its TACF counterpart in obtaining the required financial support and enthusiasm.

The CCC is looking for property in the 'Old Chestnut Belt' that would serve as a suitable site for growing resistant chestnut hybrids and advancing them to promising germplasm lines that will eventually restock our woodlands.

CCC members and chestnut enthusiasts can help us reach our goal. No effort is too small to be of value. Keep the needs of the CCC at the forefront of your thoughts!

INTERNATIONAL YEAR of OLDER PERSONS:

The United Nations declared 1999 the International Year of Older Persons. The objective was to recognize the contributions of older people to society. The CCC is well aware of the contributions of older citizens in bringing a focus to the objective of restoring the American chestnut. Early memories would not let them forget this great monarch of the forests that meant so much to the lives of our pioneers and forebears.

The year of recognition is rapidly drawing to a close. So passes another milestone. Perhaps these efforts have inched us a bit closer to our goal. Let us remember that collectively the strength of youth and the wisdom of older ones achieve Herculean gains!

NEW PLANTINGS PRODUCE SEED:

CCC director, Clem Fisher, reports that plantings of *C. dentata* made in the early 1990's in Caradoc township of Middlesex County yield small harvests of seeds on two farms this past autumn.

In the past the Council has had difficulty meeting the requests for *C. dentata* seeds for plantings in Canada. It is encouraging to note that the new harvest sites may soon fill the void.

CCC WEBSITE:

A website for the CCC has been developed. A working version has been posted a <http://www.uoguelph.ca/~chestnut>. Members of the CCC are invited to visit this site and send suggestions for additions and/or improvements to Greg Boland, University of Guelph, at, gboland@uoguelph.ca.

CCC MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL and APPEAL for NEW MEMBERS:

The Canadian Chestnut Council needs your help. Your presence at meetings doesn't go unnoticed. If you haven't submitted your annual dues or made a financial contribution, please do so at your earliest convenience. (We would be pleased to talk to members and others regarding their philanthropic interests including major gifts, endowments, etc. In 1998, single donations ranged from \$10.00 to more than \$600.00)

The Canadian Chestnut Council

Membership Regular \$10.00 _____, Contributing \$25.00 _____.

Make cheque payable to; Canadian Chestnut Council, c/o R. Pamentor, RR# 1, Orangeville, ON., L9W 2Y8.

Name _____

Do you know of any unrecorded chestnut trees? _____

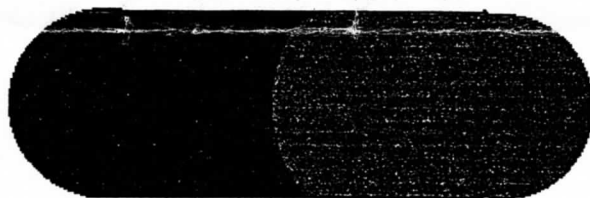
Address _____

If yes, please give location, size and condition.

Telephone _____

Other comments and suggestions re: aiding and promoting the Council's objectives. _____

THE American Chestnut Time Capsule



1999 is the year of recognizing and celebrating our elders.

The Canadian Chestnut Council is organizing a time capsule which will be sealed on December 31, 1999. The capsule will be opened on the occasion that we have a resistant American Chestnut tree, as close as possible to its original ancestors.

We sincerely encourage any and all people to submit notes, pictures, credos, stories, memories, anecdotes, recipes, suggestions, challenges, samples, etc. We will especially value submissions from anyone alive at the time the original trees were still living. Please date, and place each occurrence or recollection. In this way we will connect the past with the future. You will be helping us to preserve what could otherwise be lost—forever.

Thus; we can celebrate our elders, we can recognize the invaluable resource which you are, and we can offer you—in a small way—a bit of immortality.

Please submit your materials to any one of our directors or send them directly to:

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