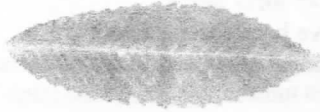


Canadian Chestnut Council (CCC)

...on the Chestnut Trail



NEWSLETTER # 41

April 2006

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/~chestnut>

In this issue: - Workshop...Letters...Meet Your Directors...History...Photographs...and more!

CCC Workshop at Onondaga Farms

The Canadian Chestnut Council Will hold a free Open House Workshop at the Tim Horton's Onondaga Farms Children's Camp on Saturday, 22 April, 2006. Members and non-members alike are welcome.

The aim of the workshop is to teach attendees the arts of grafting and of planting tree seedlings, and to acquaint them with one of the CCC's planting sites.

Directors John Hill, and Murray Alward, and CCC Technician Dragan Galic, have planned an interesting and educational day with outdoor activities:

- 10:00-10:30 – Registration and coffee
- 10:30-12:00 – Grafting Workshop
- 12:00 Lunch
- 1:00-3:00 – Planting Workshop
- 3:00-3:30 – Questions and adjournment

For those who would like to learn how to grow trees from nuts or seedlings, or to graft branches to root stock, the knowledge and counsel of Dragan Galic and the CCC's Board of Directors will be at your service.

The Onondaga Farms can be reached by driving south of Cambridge on Highway 24 to the Glen Morris sideroad, then east a few hundred meters to the farm gate on the south side. A farm sign is on Highway 24.

A cafeteria lunch will be available from the Onondaga Farms kitchen staff at nominal cost, or visitors can bring a bag lunch or dine at a local restaurant.

Be sure to attend this educational workshop, meet like-minded people and see the results of CCC operations to date.



The Canadian Chestnut Council

The CCC is a scientific and charitable organization with the mission to restore the American chestnut. All its officers volunteer their services both in the field and at the desk. The CCC annual meeting, the web site and this Newsletter dispense information to generate support for saving and restoring this once-important forest tree.

Executive

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RR # 2, Orangeville, ON L9W 2Y9
519-942-8085

Treasurer - Mr. Douglas McKeen
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519-941-5765

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Mr. Murray Alward
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Dr. Arthur Langford, Simcoe, ON
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Dr. Peter Rice, Hamilton, ON

EDITORIALS

A number of new memberships have been received with an application form that specifies an annual membership fee of \$20.00

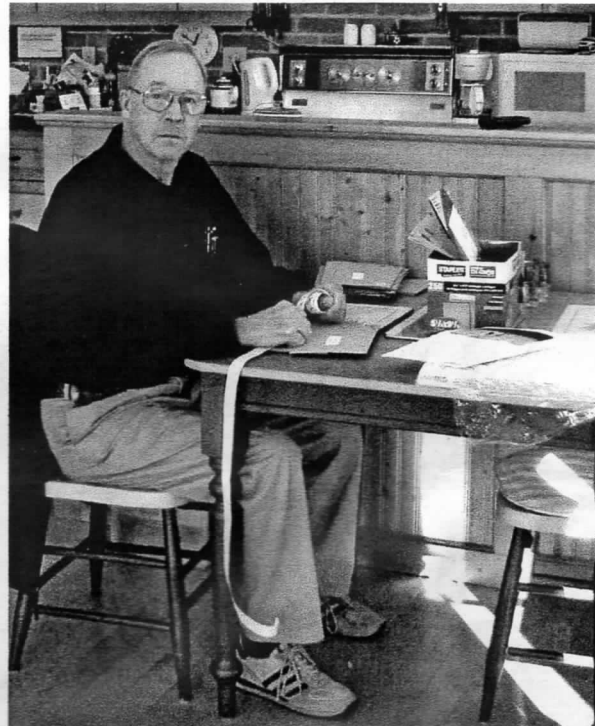
You will be pleased to learn that this figure is wrong. Somehow membership forms were circulated at a recent public meeting with the incorrect fee printed upon them.

The annual CCC membership fee remains at \$15.00. Those who have overpaid can either apply to recover the excess or regard it as a donation for a worthy cause. (We hope the latter, to save postage fees.)

Many thanks for all those letters and tree reports. Page 3 is the result. Also, the CCC has been offered more planting space. As we now require small plots for native American chestnut plantings, to maintain a reserve of Canadian genes and reduce travel times for annual pollination, the offer is gratefully received and will be followed up.

Readers may have been wondering (Well, gee, perhaps a few were wondering) how your Newsletters manage to reach you despite the voluntary nature of your Executive.

See below.



Your humble scribe, the Editor, at work with newsletters, envelopes, address labels and postage stamps at the kitchen table.

Letters

From Ottawa, Ontario

I noticed what certainly looked like (according to the leaves and nuts) an American chestnut tree on someone's front lawn a few yards north of the intersection of Cromwell Crescent and Meadowvale Avenue, in east end Hamilton, about a half mile south of the large Eastgate shopping mall.

I would estimate the tree size at about 25 feet height and perhaps around eight inches in diameter trunk size. It seems very healthy.
- Roderick Taylor

Thanks, Roderick. Your report will be included in the CCC Tree Registry for the University of Guelph.

From Barrie, Ontario

Thank you for the last Newsletter. I congratulate Dr McKean on his "retirement" and thank him for all his efforts in bringing back this valuable tree species. I believe the Chestnut Council should nominate Dr McKean for the Order of Ontario or the Order of Canada. I welcome [new chairman] Dr Anderson.

I have 40 small chestnut trees planted in 1999. This past summer some actually fruited.
J Neil Craig

From Calgary, Alberta

William Dyck reported an American chestnut tree 16 feet high in Calgary, and two more trees ("type unknown") eight feet high in Invermere, BC. We hope that Mr Dyck will contribute more details – eg, tree types and more precise locations.

From Waterdown, Ontario

As a certified Arborist living in Waterdown and working in Brantford, I am interested in volunteering my services in any way – ie, seed collection or blight analysis. I know of two trees, both on the Burford Nursery property. I have climbed one (for seed), which has the blight (40 feet) and one behind it, blight free, about 30 feet.

Please consider participating in the Open House-Workshop at Onondaga Farms, 22 April. The Directors engaged in pollination and nut harvests will want to meet you there! - Ed

From West Virginia, USA

Thank you very much for the invitation to attend the Canadian Chestnut Council meeting in Woodstock, Canada. I had a thoroughly enjoyable time.

The enthusiasm of your group reminds me of TACF a few years ago; a time when we were more passionate about our mission and less interested in promoting the cause.

- William MacDonald, Professor of Plant Pathology,
West Virginia University and member, TACF

[Dr MacDonald was guest speaker at the annual meeting.]

From Sault Ste Marie, Ontario

...I set the [refrigerator] temperature to about 43 degrees F. Because the nuts were under size I reasoned I would keep the temperature a few degrees above freezing. They were planted in 2-liter juice cartons...One nut was cracked at harvest time so I put a wee piece of masking tape on it....They were planted on Feb 11th and 12th and over a week to ten days all three sprouted. They are up about 5" now.

Thanks guys for the good guidance. - Ron Bridge

From Ridgetown, Ontario

I have land available for tree planting for field sites.

- Douglas Desmond

[The CCC is grateful for this offer as we want to establish plantings of native – non hybrid - chestnuts in dispersed sites, to preserve gene diversity. – Ed.]

From Maidstone, Ontario

I recently read an article from National Geographic – February 1990 issue regarding chestnuts making a comeback – which sparked my interest. - Linda and Tom Halford.



Meet Your Directors

Dr Arthur Langford, Emeritus Professor of Biology at Bishop's University in Lennoxville, Quebec, helped found the Canadian Chestnut Council and has been an Honorary Director ever since. He has faithfully attended nearly all Directors' meetings, listening carefully and offering sound advice based on his many years of experience. At 95 years of age, he remains a valued member of your Board of Directors.

Arthur was born in Simcoe County, and attended Queen's University for his Honours BA and then the University of Toronto to obtain his MA and PhD in Plant Pathology and Genetics.

Not content with that training, he later took leaves of absence to study Soil Antibiosis at the University of Wisconsin, Forest Ecology at Rutgers

University and Desert Vegetation Gradient Analysis

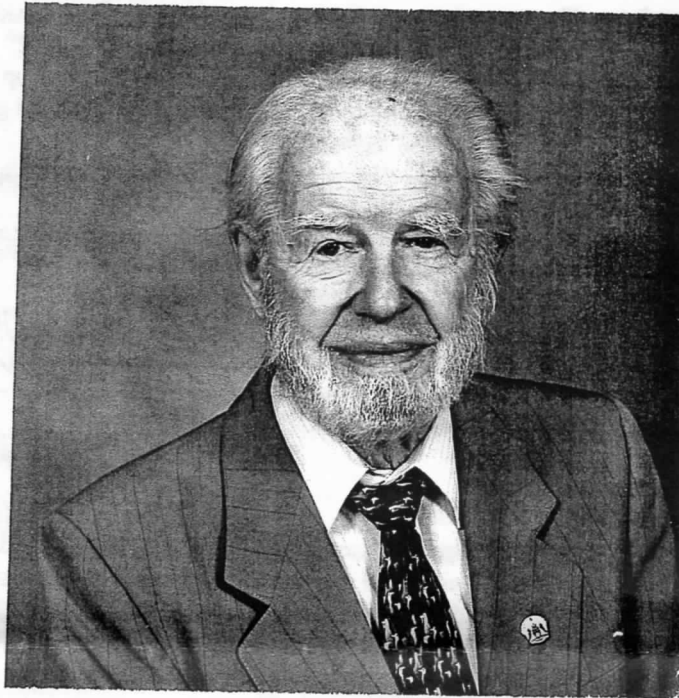
at the University of California at Santa Barbara. (He claims he wanted to fill gaps in his knowledge!)

Teaching began at Bishop's in 1937 and ended officially, perhaps, in 1980. During the Second World War Arthur was also second-in-command of the Bishop's University officers training corps (COTC).

A summer was devoted to directing a high-school-biology teachers' training school in Minnesota and four years were spent with the Canadian International Development Agency in Swaziland in furtherance of university biological studies.

He has held so many teaching appointments that it would be foolhardy to attempt to list them all here.

Arthur persists in educating the younger generations, including your Board of Directors.



We are blessed by his support.

The Recipe Corner

Braised Chestnut and Pearl Onion Confit

Time to make: 45 minutes

Serves 4 to 6 persons as a side dish

- 10 ounces pearl onions (preferably red)
- 2 cups roasted, shelled and skinned onions
- ¾ stick (6 tablespoons) unsalted butter
- ½ cup chicken broth
- 2 large celery stalks, sliced ½ inch thick
- 2 large shallots, coarsely chopped (1/2 cup)
- 1 sprig fresh thyme
- 3 tablespoons dry white wine

Blanch onions in a large saucepan of boiling water three minutes. Drain and transfer to a bowl of ice and cold water. Drain onions and peel.

Cook chestnuts in three tablespoons of butter in a large saucepan over moderately low heat, stirring occasionally, two minutes. Add broth and celery. Cook at a bare simmer, stirring occasionally, until liquid is reduced to about ¼ cup, about ten minutes.

While chestnuts are cooking, heat remaining three tablespoons of butter in a ten-inch heavy skillet over moderately high heat until foam subsides; then saute shallots and peeled onions with thyme, salt and pepper to taste, stirring until onions are tender and golden brown in patches. Add wine and simmer until slightly reduced, about two minutes.

Gently stir onion mixture into chestnut mixture and season with salt and pepper.

The Last Chestnut

[The following letter appeared in the London Free Press in January, 1940. – Ed.]

A few weeks ago I noticed an article by your roving reporter on the disappearance of chestnut trees and it impressed me very much. In fact, I felt very sad over the whole affair.

Twenty years ago and a great many years before that there were always a number of boys and girls from Newbury and the district north of the village of Wardsville attending the Wardsville High School. Our favourite sport in the fall was gathering chestnuts from the trees in Mr. Peter O'Malley's woods, also from the old trees in the fields on up the old Hagarty Road (road now paved between Wardsville and Newbury).

In the fall we often took extra lunch in our lunch boxes so we might have something to eat after four o'clock before we started our search for chestnuts. I might add that we usually kept a safe distance away from a little beautifully kept cemetery in the woods. Once in a while my sister and I would venture near because some of the gravestones had our surname engraved upon them. The deceased were, however, no relation to us, just bore the same name.

The chestnut trees in those days were huge, very much gnarled and always bore quantities of nuts. The boys often climbed the trees and shook the limbs, others would throw up sticks and the nuts would simply shower down. Particularly after a frosty night, there would be many nuts on the ground and those left on the trees just ready to fall out of the half-opened burrs.

After the Great War there seemed to be a demand for chestnuts, and then the boys and girls in this section used to gather them in large quantities and sell them by the quart. So you see it came as a great shock to me when I read of the disappearance of those trees.

Rows of dead trees. Last fall I drove down through that district and found it was all too true. I saw those same chestnut trees from which we used to gather such quantities of nuts, standing out like sentinels, but dead and leafless. One huge monster was being cut into firewood.

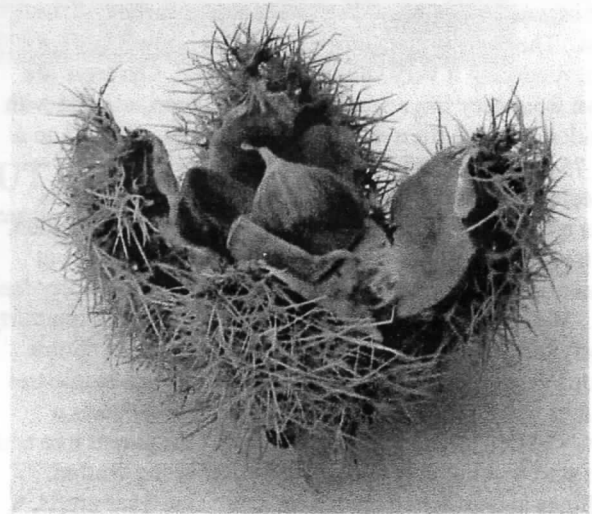
On the farm of my grandfather, Amos Fennell, near Newbury, there were three very large chestnut trees which, I venture to say, nearly every boy and man in the village visited at least once every fall. In fact, we used to get up early in the morning, after a frosty or windy night, to be the first there, but we seldom ever were.

On making further inquiries, I found that when people discovered that the chestnut trees were dying, they hastened to the local lumber mill and a man was sent out to investigate. The investigation proved that only a very few trees remained alive. The disease, or whatever it was that attacked the trees, seemed to come, as it were, like a thief in the night and destroy the chestnut trees before the owners realized it.

I do not think that the people in that section appreciated what a rare tree they had growing at their very doors, because I have met boys and girls (in my teaching days) who never saw a chestnut let alone a chestnut tree.

Sad to say, it looks as if the chestnut tree will have to be classed with the passenger pigeons, which were so plentiful in this section about sixty years ago.

- Nerissa Archer McInnis



To Roast Fresh Chestnuts

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

Make a large X with a chestnut (ie, incurved) knife or sharp paring knife on flat side of each chestnut, through the shell but not the meat.

Soak chestnuts in bowl of warm water to cover by two inches for 15 minutes, then drain well. Roast in one layer in a shallow baking dish in middle of oven

until shell curls away at X mark – about 15 minutes.

Wearing protective gloves, peel away shells from chestnuts while still hot.

Blanch chestnuts in boiling water two minutes, and drain.

Rub in a kitchen towel to remove skins.

- Gourmet Magazine, Nov 2000

Introduction of Foreign Chestnut Species into North America

In a telephone conversation a few weeks ago, I was asked by an Ontario resident when Asiatic chestnuts were first brought into North America, and more specifically when they came into Ontario.

Introductions in Relation to the Blight

Chestnut blight first appeared about 1904 in New York City. To be more precise, it was identified as a new, devastating, bark-canker disease at that time. It was soon recognized as a deadly threat to the native American chestnut. Because of its unprecedented capacity to kill, scientists concluded that it must have been a recently introduced pathogen.

Since the early 1890s, the US had established a program of introducing foreign species thought to be useful to the USA. Nursery proprietors had taken aggressive action ahead of the official scientific introduction plan. Some of the nursery introductions have been documented by Dr Sandra Anagnostakis, Connecticut Experimental Station. She reported some introductions, as listed in nursery catalogues, as occurring during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

Recently, Dr William MacDonald (guest speaker at the CCC's annual general meeting, November 2005) mailed me an 1884 nursery catalogue. It was printed by the Glenwood Nurseries, Morrisville, Becks County, Pennsylvania. In addition to a list of tree fruits, nut trees including almonds, chestnuts, filberts and walnuts were listed as well. I have extracted a few of the chestnut descriptions from the 1884 catalogue.

“Chestnut, American – the sweet native variety of the forest. The tree matures in from eighteen to twenty-five years, rendering it very valuable for timber. Our trees are grown from very large seed, which have been selected with considerable care from very productive trees. Price, 5 to 6 feet, 75 cents each, \$8.00 per dozen.

Chestnut Spanish – Fruit of enormous size, but not as sweet as the American. Very good when roasted or boiled. The tree does not grow as large as the native variety, but forms a spreading round head, from twenty-five to forty feet high. We have on our own grounds, several trees from thirty to forty feet high, which are extremely productive. Some seasons we gather more than two bushels from a single tree. The nuts usually sell in market at from 35 to 50 cents a quart. Grafted trees inherit the quality of the parent tree and often start bearing nuts in two years after being grafted. Seedlings and grafted trees are for sale. One-year grafts, 4 to 5 feet high – 75 cents each, \$8.00 per dozen. Seedling trees – 5 to 7 feet high – 50 cents each or \$5.00 per dozen.

Chestnut, Japanese – This is a variety recently introduced from Japan, which was awarded a certificate of merit by the New York Horticultural Society, as a new introduction of great value and unusual interest. As hardy as the American and not nearly as large as the Spanish chestnut. Trees commence bearing when they are three to four years old and are of ornamental habit. Price, two feet - \$1.50 each, \$15.00 per dozen.”

Note: In this catalogue listing, there was no mention of the Chinese chestnut. It was also obvious at that time that the interest in chestnuts was on nut production and the quality of

the nuts.

Introduction of Chestnuts from China

Dr Daniel Fairchild's book, "The World Was My Garden," published in 1938, proved to be a valuable source of information.

From the early 1890s, the US Department of Agriculture wanted to obtain foreign plant species that might be of interest. In the mid 1890s Dr Frank Meyer, a young Hollander who had emigrated to the United States, was hired by the US Department of Agriculture and sent to China to serve as plant explorer. By 1900 a few Chinese species had been shipped to the USA. By 1913, Chinese chestnut trees were growing well in at least one experimental planting near Washington.

Nearly a decade earlier, in 1904, when the new chestnut bark damage was discovered in the New York Botanical Gardens, the investigating scientists held firmly to their opinion that it was an introduced disease. They asked Dr Meyer to look for it in China on native stands. Soon after Dr Meyer received his directive, he found on native trees in China what he thought to be the bark-canker disease. He sent samples of infected bark to be examined. Two plant pathologists, Metcalf and Shear, determined that the fungus obtained from the bark sample from China was identical to the fungus found in New York City.

The results of inoculations of a Chinese chestnut tree growing in an experimental plot showed the latter much more resistance to the fungus than any of the American chestnuts. This was clinching evidence that the new bark disease was present in China. The postulation of the oriental origin of the chestnut blight seemed a reasonable deduction.

A Canadian Chestnut Planting Destroyed

By 1912, at the Agassiz Experimental Farm in British Columbia, a sweet chestnut nursery had been established. In that year the chestnut bark disease was discovered in the planting. Undoubtedly because of the communications between scientists at the Canadian Department of Agriculture and colleagues in Washington, DC, the Agassiz chestnut planting was destroyed by order. The Agassiz planting contained stock of US, European and Asiatic origin. Some of the original shipment's packaging, consisting of mats and castings, demonstrated conclusively that some of the planting was of Asiatic origin.

Chestnut Hybrid Plantings in Southern Ontario

The writer does not have accurate knowledge of the introduction of foreign chestnut germplasm into Southern Ontario until the early 1950s. At that time a real estate broker living at Harrow, Ontario obtained about 40 to 50 Chinese hybrid chestnut seedlings and had them planted locally. Some of the trees survived and produced annual crops of nuts. One stand of 20 trees near Harrow was still thriving in 2001. The source of these seedlings is not known.

Other plantings of introduced chestnut germplasm in Southern Ontario have been made during the last 50 years. Details are being researched. - CD McKeen

Ornate Newel Post

On many occasions, chestnut literature has alluded to the abundant use of chestnut timbers in the construction of buildings and their furnishings.

The attached photo shows a beautifully carved newel post and lower balustrade made from chestnut. A few Newsletter readers may recognize this fine piece of wooden adornment; it is in the Aylmer office of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources.

Carpentry work of such a high calibre surely whets a desire to see the chestnut restored to the deciduous woodlands of Canada.

- CD McKeen



This photograph was provided by David McLeod, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Aylmer, Ontario.

AMERICAN CHESTNUT SITE RECORD

Castanea dentata

The CCC wants to know where the chestnut trees are.

You can help by submitting any of the listed information you can provide.

Owner's name, telephone, e-mail:

Street or rural address, township, county, province:

GPS or other location data:

Number of American chestnut trees:

Other environmental data:

Send to any CCC director. Thanks!



Not all chestnut seedlings co-operate. Doug McKeen, Murray Alward, Colin McKeen, George Collin, Mike Nemerovski, John Hill, Tom Welacky, Dragan Galic (l to r) and Terry Anderson (foreground) examine a failing seedling at Onondaga Farms.

Membership

Membership fees and donations are tax deductible.

Membership Renewal:

Annual subscription = \$15.00 \$

Donations in excess of the annual subscription will be recognized in the Newsletter in the following categories (Requests for anonymity will be honoured):

Gold Leaf:	\$1,000 or more
Silver Leaf:	\$500-\$999
Bronze Leaf:	\$250-\$499
Green Leaf:	\$100-\$249
White Leaf:	Less than \$100

Donation: \$

Total enclosed: \$

**Make all cheques payable to the
Canadian Chestnut Council**

Comments:

Volunteers

We need your help! As our program grows and our activities expand, we very much need the talents and skills of our members. If you would like to contribute your skills, please tell us. We start pollinating in early summer!

I'm interested in (check all that apply):

- Membership
- Publicity
- Fundraising
- Library research
- Field work
- Other:

Return your completed form to the Secretary:

Charles Hooker, 431068 19th Line, RR # 2
Orangeville, Ontario L9W 2Y9
chuckh@sympatico.ca