

# **Canadian Chestnut Council**

**. . . on the Chestnut Trail**

1332 Suncrest Road  
Kingsville, Ontario N9Y 3H3

**NEWSLETTER #7**  
September 1993

## **ANNUAL MEETING**

The Annual Meeting for Directors and Members of the Canadian Chestnut Council (CCC) will be held November 3 at OMAF's Horticultural Experiment Station, Simcoe, Ontario.

Commencing at 1:30 pm, after brief introductory remarks and reports on current blight control research, the meeting is designed to allow attenders to ask questions and comment on the growth of their chestnut plantings, etc. Coloured slides and pictures showing trees with problems as well as satisfactory growth will be welcome and should provide genuine interest. Come to learn about the part you are playing and can play in the restoration of the American chestnut in Ontario and Canada.

Please make note now of the date — November 3 — for the Annual Meeting. We'll remind you again in late October.

## **BLOSSOMING AND HARVESTING**

Due to the cool, wet spring chestnut trees came into bloom in Ontario somewhat later than usual. However, by the middle of July all trees had come to the end of their bloom period. 1992 was a poor nut year. Judged by the amount of bloom seen this year a better than usual harvest of nuts is expected.

The nut harvest will begin in late September and continue through the first week in October. Because of the prevalent high summer temperatures and adequate moisture conditions, nut fall may begin a few days earlier than usual. Most of the nut harvest in October will be from single blight-free trees which because of a lack of cross-pollination will probably produce only a few mature seeds. In the past, however, a few of these single trees have produced as many as 100 to 150 or more plump seeds. Burrs with immature seeds occasionally open as early as September 20th. Mature seeds are obtained from burrs opening later, often in early October. Plump seeds are usually found in burrs at the top of the tree and out at the ends of branches.

The presence of 'noisy' blue jays around the trees usually tells us that the nut harvest is on. A daily, early morning search for nuts among the fuller leaves near the base of the tree is usually most rewarding. A search is particularly advisable after a high wind has shaken nuts from partially opened burrs.

## **NUT STORAGE**

Leaving the harvested nuts to ripen for one week to ten days on a garage bench secure from squirrels and other predators is advisable. Then they should be enclosed within one or two plastic bags and stored in the refrigerator for the winter. Embedded in a small amount of barely moist peat moss, the nuts will retain their germinality. The nut package should be inspected every month or so to ensure that they have not molded. Moldy nuts may be washed in water to remove the mold, then dried for a few minutes and stored again in clean containers.

## **NUT GERMINATION AND PLANTING**

Chestnuts stored under proper storage conditions don't usually start to germinate until March or early April. Sprouted nuts may be planted in containers (One litre milk cartons are ideal) in field soil. Sandy soils such as are found in tobacco fields are ideal. A soil mixture like the following is also excellent:

- 2 parts sandy field soil
- 1 part peat moss
- 1 part vermiculite

Containers must have holes in the bottom to allow excess water to drain out.

Nuts may be planted in a cold frame in the autumn before the ground freezes. They should be planted about 3/4 inch below the surface of the soil. Outdoor beds should be covered with a layer of straw or leaves to a depth of at least six inches to keep the soil below from freezing. Of course, all outdoor plantings must be screened with metal mesh wire to exclude rodents.

## **PROTECTION OF YOUNG TREES**

Plastic (Tubex) protectors (1.3 and 1.6 metres high) usually work well in protecting field plantings. The tubes act like miniature greenhouses and protect seedling trees from deer browsing, until the trees grow out of the top. Last winter in one planting in the Niagara area mice or voles burrowed through the base of the tubex protector and girdled the stems. It is advisable to check on all plantings periodically for rodent and other damage.

If plastic tubes have not been used, young trees should be protected in the autumn after dormancy by tree guards such as are used in fruit orchards to prevent deer and vermin damage during the winter. Sprays to deter rabbit and deer feeding may also be applied.

## **COLD HARDINES**

The American chestnut has been found to be more cold tolerant than formerly thought. A 17 year old planting of eight trees at Ottawa has done well. We have also verified the existence of American chestnut trees growing near Huntsville, Ontario. The largest tree is 50 ft. high and has a trunk diameter of about 9 inches at breast height. There are two smaller sprouts, 3 ft. and 7 ft. high, about 100 ft. away. The big tree is producing burrs that may contain plump nuts.

In addition to the new plantings within the old chestnut belt in Southwestern Ontario, new plantings in the counties of Dufferin, Victoria, Hastings, Frontenac and Prince Edward have been established. Two trees in a four year old planting in Dufferin County are 9 feet high. Most are in the two to five foot range.

This year the late season frosts in May and June damaged the opening buds in several chestnut plantings of southern Ontario. Despite the frost damage recovery was quite rapid and by September the terminal growth on two- and three-year old plantings ranged from 1.5 to 2.0 feet or more.

## **RESEARCH ON BLIGHT HYPOVIRULENCE**

Dr. Greg J. Boland, University of Guelph and Dr. Colin D. McKeen have inoculated several chestnut blight sites in southern Ontario with hypovirulent strains of the blight fungus. The conversion of the fungus from high virulence to low virulence is being closely monitored. A progress report on their research will be given at the annual meeting in Simcoe.

## **SIZE OF CHESTNUT TREES**

The coordinator for the State of Connecticut for the American Chestnut Foundation has recently reported finding a large chestnut tree growing near New London, CT with a trunk diameter of 18 inches and a height of 70 feet. Ontario can boast of having ten or more trees of that size or larger. Our biggest tree has a trunk diameter slightly in excess of 27 inches with a height of 80 feet. The Arner chestnut tree in Essex County has a trunk diameter of about 29 inches but is not as high.

## **CHESTNUT RESTORATION PROGRAM IN THE USA**

In addition to much research work being conducted in several of the northeastern states on the hypovirulence phenomenon, a large program is underway to breed a blight-resistant chestnut. It is to have the qualities of the once dominant forest tree. This project may take 25 years or more to complete. The plan is soundly based and good progress is being made using a range of appropriate breeding lines.

## **ACF ANNUAL MEETING**

Saturday, October 23 and Sunday, October 24 are the dates of the Annual Meeting of the American Chestnut Foundation. The meeting will be held at the Wagner Research Farm, Meadowview, VA. Registration fee is \$55.00 for members and guests; \$30.00 for persons 18 years and under.

The program will feature Research Farm Tours, and Presentations. Full details can be obtained from The Executive Office, ACF, Box 4044, Bennington, VT, 05201. Telephone (802) 447-0110.

## **MEMBERSHIP**

Thanks to the many persons who have sent in their membership dues for 1993. We have also noted your many interesting comments. If we have not received your 1993 dues to date, there is a reminder, top right, page one of this newsletter. Your continued support and interest is appreciated.

## **BROCHURES**

We enclosed the revised Canadian Chestnut Council brochure with our April newsletter. If you or your organization could use additional copies, please let us know. This could help us promote CCC to interested non-members. Copies will also be available at the Annual Meeting.

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Membership: regular \$10.00 \_\_\_\_\_, contributing \$25.00+ \_\_\_\_\_.

Make cheques payable to: Canadian Chestnut Council  
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Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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Comments and suggestions \_\_\_\_\_

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*Detach and return with payment.*