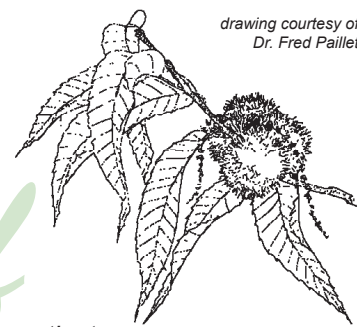


News from the Connecticut Chapter of The American Chestnut Foundation

Winter/Spring 2022

the New Leaf

Our mission is restoration of the American chestnut in the State of Connecticut



drawing courtesy of
Dr. Fred Paillet

President's Letter



CT-TACF Chapter President Jack Swatt and Mark Vollaro planting the newest Seed Orchard in Hurlbut Field, in partnership with the Winchester Land Trust.
Photo by Florian Carle.

Over the past few years, I have seen our chapter grow tremendously. Our membership has been steadily increasing every year, and the work our members are doing is growing as well. We have started planting our last Seed orchard and are currently busy testing for and selecting the most blight-tolerant trees in our remaining backcross orchards. Once selections are complete, the remaining trees will be producing chestnuts to fill our Seed orchards, but we will still have years of work until that goal is accomplished. We have also expanded our plantings to include Germplasm Conservation Orchards (GCOs) to help preserve and diversify the remaining American chestnuts as well as provide a means of out crossing the Darling 58 transgenic tree. We have started four GCOs in each of the last two years so that we currently have eight. Given the tremendous American chestnut harvest we had this year, including many new sources of American chestnut germplasm, we will need to continue planting in those orchards as well as start four or more new orchards. As our chapter grows, the work needed to fulfill our mission will continue to grow.

When our chapter was first incorporated, the only plan for fulfilling our mission was through the backcross breeding program. TACF has now expanded and advanced the methods we are using to obtain blight tolerance through genetic research. In order to continue to achieve the great work that our chapter has done, we need to

also expand at the organizational level. While we have seen a tremendous outpouring of volunteerism to help with planting and maintaining orchards, as well as locating and harvesting nuts from new American chestnut sources, we also have a need for people to help organize the planting and harvesting activities, along with other functions of the chapter. We have had some significant turnover at the board level lately and are looking for members who would like to help continue our efforts at the organizational level. If you would like to become more involved with our chapter by becoming a member of our board, please let us know (at CTChapter@acf.org). Some of the positions we are looking for help with include Backcross Program Coordinator, GCO Coordinator, Orchard Supply Coordinator, Grants Writer and several other committee roles. We are also looking for people willing to become Orchard Managers at potential orchard sites in Sherman and Mystic. We will always be looking for more people willing to help with making sure that American chestnut trees will once again thrive in the forests of Connecticut.

President, CT-TACF

Chestnut show-and-tell all over Connecticut!

By Florian Carle



CAES Plant Science Day in Lockwood Farm in Hamden on August 4, 2021

Chestnut trees started to be killed by the blight in 1904, and since then, chestnut aficionados, orchard managers, and scientists are passing down their knowledge and love of chestnuts from generations to generations to increase the success of restoring the American

chestnut tree to its native range.

Our chapter spent the last year presenting our work, and showing burrs, leaves, and nuts to the curious attendees of fairs, shows, and educational events.

This year again, we will be present

We found the lost Chestnut Bee!

By Florian Carle

Last summer, our Chapter partnered with the Massachusetts/Rhodes Island Chapter and entomologist Michael Veit to conduct survey all over New England to look for the Chestnut bee (*Andrena rehni*) which was thought to be extinct due to the functional extinction of the American Chestnut tree. We were hopeful to find more specimens of this bee since it was recently found in a Chinquapin tree in one of Connecticut's chestnut groves.

The goal of the survey was to assess the distribution and abundance of *A. rehni* on chestnut trees in orchards and other sites, both planted and natural. In addition, this survey would help determine the diversity of bees and other insects visiting *Castanea* flowers, and observe what insects visit female flowers and thus might play a role in the pollination.

In June and July, a team of TACF volunteers and some SCSU students grabbed their nets and collection jars,

and headed to blossoming chestnut orchards in a warm summer day.

With dexterity, 21 bees *hunters* flicked their nets to catch all the insects enjoying the chestnut pollen. They collected samples during 55 visits on 27 sites in New England, including 11 in Connecticut.

They collected a total of 685 bees from 61 species, and to the delight of everyone involved in the survey, the famous *A. rehni* were found again!

A. rehni were collected at the two sites where they had been previously seen: 38 in Lockwood Farm in CT and 3 at Mt. Ella in MA. 3 more *A. rehni* were found in a new location on Mt. Tom in MA. All these bees were collected on multiple species of Chestnut and Chinquapin, both domestic and imported.

This preliminary survey will help scientists better understand this shy bee and develop protection plan to see their population thrive! 🐝

at the Flower and Garden Show in Hartford, the Plant Science Day in Hamden, and at the Durham State Fair (see details in the calendar of events in the back). Additionally, we will host planting events where you can get to plant chestnuts, and see how well they grow, or learn how to identify wild chestnut trees. We hope to see many of you soon! 🌰



Charlie Chestnut, the now decommissioned mascot of the ACF. If you come to our events, you can have the chance to grab a vintage temporary tattoo!



Several *A. rehni* were found in CAES Lockwood farm on this chestnut tree [*C. dentata* x (*C. pumila* x *C. crenata*)] on June 15, 2021.

A Successful Search for New Sources of American Chestnuts

By Jack Swatt



CT-TACF member David Liedlich (tan shirt) and CT-TACF President Jack Swatt (blue shirt and backpack) discuss how the forest opening gives chestnut sprouts an opportunity to flourish with the chestnut hike attendees. Several healthy chestnut saplings are seen at the successional forest edge. Photo by Gosia Liedlich

CT-TACF Officers and Board of Directors

Officers

President – Jack Swatt

President Emeritus – Star Childs

Treasurer – Dr. Jack Ostroff

Secretary – Dr. Florian Carle

Board of Directors (term ending)

Bill Adamsen (2022)

Christian Allyn (2023)

Dr. Phill Arnold (2022)

John Baker (2022)

Dr. David Bingham (2022)

Michael Gaffey (2023)

Jim Gage (2022)

Jane Harris (2023)

Dr. Bert Malkus (2022)

Jack Morris (2022)

Ginny Patsun (2022)

Mark Vollaro (2022)

E. Woods Sinclair (2023)

Contact

CTChapter@acf.org

The CT Chapter held several Chestnut Hikes this past July looking for new sources of American chestnut germplasm. The CT Dept. of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP) had previously performed habitat management harvests at many parcels of state-owned land to create early successional habitat for the New England Cottontail, a species that was proposed for listing on the Endangered Species List. Since these forest management practices provide an opportunity for chestnut sprouts to grow quickly in abundant sunshine, we targeted these areas at about 3-5 years after harvest to look for flowering American chestnut saplings.

At both the Wyantenock State Forest in Warren and the Naugatuck State Forest in Hamden, several young flowering chestnut trees were found. Some of them were also noted to already have female flowers in addition

to the male catkins. This gave us hope that a return in the fall would find many developing chestnut burs. Our expectations were fulfilled in late September when we were able to harvest chestnut burs from five trees at Wyantenock and one from Hamden. With continued growth, these chestnut nurseries will hopefully provide us with American chestnuts for several years to plant in our Germplasm Conservation Orchards. 🍂

The CT chapter is on Facebook!

Hosted under The American Chestnut Foundation Facebook Page, this community group allows every member to ask questions, share articles, info, upcoming events that might interest Chestnut enthusiasts!

Join us at www.facebook.com/groups/cttacf



Upcoming Calendar of Events

All of the events scheduled are subject to possible change since we are not sure what the pandemic will look like this far in advance. We will follow all the CDC guidelines at that time to keep all of us safe.

CT Flower and Garden Show, Hartford

February 24-27, 2022

Once again, we will be having an exhibit at the CT Flower and Garden Show in Hartford. Stop by our table in the CT Federated Garden exhibit, or if you would like to volunteer and help spread the word about our efforts to restore the American chestnut, contact us at CTChapter@acf.org.

Annual Membership Meeting

April 2, 2022 - 10 AM

I'll say it again -- Hopefully, this will be the last year we have to meet over Zoom. After the Annual Membership Meeting, we will have a guest speaker on a chestnut relevant topic (TBD). The Spring Board Meeting will also follow the Annual Membership Meeting.

Orchard Plantings in Winchester and several additional orchard sites throughout the state

May, 2022

We will need volunteers to help with planting American chestnut seeds in several new Germplasm Conservation Orchards throughout the state as well as planting additional seeds in the Winchester Seed Orchard. Details will be made available as it gets closer to planting season.

Chestnut Hikes

June/July, 2022

Late June and early July are great times to look for chestnut trees when their fragrant cream-colored blooms make the trees more visible. A schedule of hikes will be sent via chapter email and posted on our website as it gets closer to that time. If

you would be interested in leading a hike to known or potential chestnut locations, contact us at CTChapter@acf.org.

CAES Plant Science Day

August, 2022

Join us at the lovely Lockwood Farm in Hamden for the CAES Plant Science Day where we will welcome you with an exhibit on the Foundation work, surrounded by a wide variety of chestnut trees!

Exhibit at the Durham Fair

September 22-25, 2022

The Durham Fair is one of the largest fairs in CT. We host an exhibit educating people about the American chestnut and our mission in the Discovery Center. Stop by, shuck chestnuts harvested a few days before the fair, and come ask all your questions!