# Chestnut Mast

Volume 11, Issue 1 The American Chestnut Foundation — Carolinas Chapter Spring 2009


# My Memories of Dr. Arthur Graves


**By Dr. Patricia DeCoursey**
**University of South Carolina**

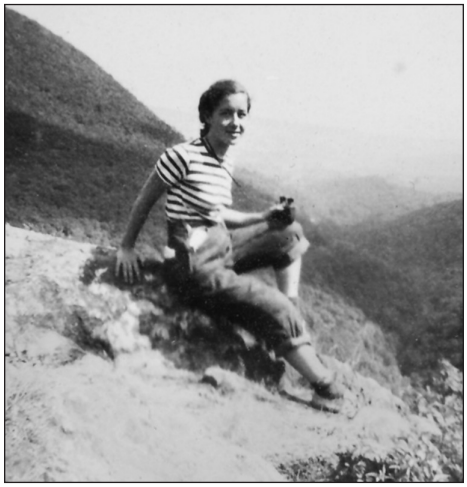

My first field trip as a new member of the Carolinas Chapter of The American Chestnut Foundation was a memorable event, featuring tours of two backcross chestnut orchards located west of Asheville, N.C.

The group of 20 people I was with was warmly welcoming, the orchard visits were highly educational, and the scenery of the Sandy Mush Valley in resplendent fall color was spectacular. Although I was a new member, I was not totally new to chestnut experiences.

As a 14-year-old, I had attended a natural history summer camp and had hiked and tented in the ghost forests of the American chestnut trees in the Berkshire Mountains of western Massachusetts. I was thrilled at the grandeur of these magnificent trees still standing many years after they had died of chestnut blight.

While exploring in the summer of 1945, I discovered one tall tree sprout in a remote forest, covered with catkins. Instantly, I ecstatically decided to return in October to check for nuts. To my delight, the tree was still alive, and I retrieved 30 plump nuts.

I had learned that a center for research on chestnuts was located at the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens of New York, under the direction of Dr. Arthur Graves. One of my treasured memories is that of delivering my chestnuts to him and hearing him tell of his research. His great love of chestnuts and his kindness in encouraging young people have been an inspiration to me throughout my career as a scientist.



*Above is a snapshot of my trip to collect chestnuts in 1945. The photo was taken on the side of Mt. Everett, the second highest peak in the Berkshire Mountains of Massachusetts, not far from the town of Copake Falls. It is close to the site of the chestnut tree I discovered that summer. In the photo to the right, taken last year, I'm holding onto a burl.*

I lost contact with him when I went off to college at Cornell University to major in zoology. Then a few months ago, in my role of directing the restoration of the University of South Carolina's Arboretum, I decided to plant a grove of chestnut trees as part of the program. After learning about the work of The American Chestnut Foundation, I ordered a copy of *Mighty Giants*. The photograph of and articles about Dr. Graves triggered happy recollections of my pivotal chestnut contact with him.

## In This Issue

## President's Message

# Much ado about chestnuts

The last year has been an extremely active year for the Carolinas Chapter, with activities and progress on every front. In the spring of 2008, Paul Sisco led volunteers from the Cliffs at Glassy Mountain, S.C., in their planting of our latest breeding orchard. In late spring, several older orchards were inoculated with chestnut blight so that selections for blight resistant trees could be made by Fred Hebard and Paul last fall.

We started in earnest our program to establish 20 lines of hybrid chestnuts that have parents from low elevation sites in the Piedmont to complement our established lines from high elevation parents. And Joe James' extensive program on *Phytophthora* resistance has attracted national attention while growing even larger now in its sixth year.

This year, we harvested over 500 BC4 hybrid nuts with low elevation fathers, about 100 hybrid nuts from *Phytophthora* resistant parents in Joe James' program, and over 1,800 pure American nuts from wild sources.

We were also privileged to tour Judy Coker's orchard at Cataloochee Ranch in the spring. In the fall, we visited Don Myers' and Susan Wilson's orchard and Brad Stanback's Winterberry orchard. We were all excited to meet Patricia DeCoursey at the fall meeting.

We had a well-attended chapter meeting in August at Hanging Rock State Park, where Noah Reynolds and Eddie Barr presented a history of the Reynolds' Devotion Estate. William Wood of Chapel Hill told us his fine and moving story of the cutting of the old great chestnut, killed by the blight, on his father's farm, not far from the Devotion Estate.

Last year, our past president, Kenneth Summerville, retired from the board, and in his place Ron Myers, another past president, rejoined the board. Paul Sisco retired from his position as Southern Regional Science coordinator for the national foundation, but continues as both a chapter and national board member and leader in our chapter.

I was a member of the selection committee of the national board in the search for a new national foundation president this last fall. From a number of really well-qualified candidates, we recommended Bryan Burhans, who was with the National Wild Turkey Foundation, to the national board as successor to Marshal Case. Bryan became president on February 1, and we look forward to working with him in the future.

*What chapter presidents do: water the plants they spent the morning moving, but only after they've moved the tons of dirt in the bags now pictured between the tubs from the truck. Joe James is directing work in the background. The photo was taken at Chestnut Return Farm last spring.*

He met with our chapter board in early March at the new national headquarters that have been moved from Bennington, Vt., to Asheville, N.C. Bryan was a resident of South Carolina before becoming president.

With a new national president this year, 2009 is an important year in the history of The American Chestnut Foundation. And this year, for the first time, advanced hybrid BC3-F3 nuts will be available for planting by members.

There are only 1,000 such nuts available this year, and they are being distributed, five at a time, to the first 200 members, in order of longest continuous membership.

This coming year should be even more active for our chapter, with several new orchards to establish this spring, pollen from surviving trees to be collected in June, pollinations to do at Meadowview, and then harvesting in the fall. I hope that many of you can join us in these more strenous activities, or at one of our meetings later in the year.

**Steve Barilovits III**
**Winter/Spring 2008/2009**

CAROLINAS CHAPTER
THE AMERICAN CHESTNUT FOUNDATION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*Photos by or courtesy of Doug Gillis, Steve Barilovits III, Joe James, Judy Coker, Patricia DeCoursey, Davidson College and Meghan Jordan.*

*Sir Speedy Printing, Asheville, N.C.*

# A time to harvest (carefully)

**By Steve Barilovits III**
**Charlotte, N.C.**

In 2008, the Carolinas Chapter harvested 1,871 open pollinated, wild American chestnuts from the Blue Ridge Parkway, south of Asheville, N.C.

We collect open pollinated American chestnut seed from trees growing on property owned by the National Park Service in strict compliance with a scientific and research collecting permit from the National Park Service of the United States Department of the Interior. The land is adjacent to the Blue Ridge Parkway

Four of us harvested these nuts in a full day of sweaty work in October. Wild chestnuts must be harvested while the burs are still green, before they have opened on the tree to release the nuts to the ground, and thus to the squirrels.

Timing is important - too early, and nuts aren't ripe, but too late, or an early frost, and the burs open before we can get to them.

Even with the danger of frost in the mountains, when we harvest the nuts, the weather can be hot and humid or cold and windy. Chestnut burs are very spiny with hundreds of sharp spines, each of which can puncture skin like a sliver of glass.

In fact, the chestnut's bur's spines are almost made of glass; the chestnut transports silica from the soil and deposits in the spines. So when you handle chestnut burs, use thick, rubberized gloves.

After the burs are harvested, they must be shucked. That's the process of opening the burs to remove the nuts, since most of the burs, once removed from the tree, won't open on their own like they would on the tree.

There are three real dangers in harvesting the wild chestnuts. The first is when the bur is clipped from the tree and falls down; the catcher has to be ready, wearing eye protection, or prepared to suffer the cuts or nasty injuries.

The second is from the steep slopes where we are usually working, falling or slipping on the slopes. Because of the dense foliage on the slopes around the chestnuts, what looks like solid footing can be a one- to ten-foot drop. The dense foliage is also commonly a mixture of luscious poison ivy and muscular blackberry vines.

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*Above, chapter members harvesting wild American chestnut burs from 30-foot American chestnut sprouts on a steep hillside along the Blue Ridge Parkway, south of Asheville, N.C. To the left, chapter treasurer Don Surrette holding harvested chestnut burs along the Blue Ridge Parkway.*

# Fighting *P. cinnamomi*

Phytophthora cinnamomi *is the causative organism of "root rot" disease and kills American chestnuts. Hybrid seedlings have a greater resistance to the disease.*

**By Joe James**
**Chestnut Return Farm**
**Seneca, S.C.**

Starting in 2001, I began planting hybrid chestnuts on my red clay farm that I affectionately called "Chestnut Return" near Seneca, S.C. For three years, all my trees kept dying regardless of my growing or watering regimen. Working with Steve Jeffers, a plant pathologist at Clemson University, we isolated *Phytophthora cinnamomi* as the causative organism of this "root rot" disease.

In the South, the very survival of American chestnut depends on finding a cure for this disease, which kills all pure American chestnuts. Knowing Chinese chestnuts to be: (1) fully resistant to root rot; and (2) that each of the hybrids produced by The American Chestnut Foundation have a great or great-great grandparent that was Chinese, I hoped by growing a large number of nuts to find some seedlings that could survive *Phytophthora cinnamomi*. Starting with two large planting tubs (actually stock watering tanks) in 2004 and with 10 tubs in 2008, we have screened 6,808 seedlings for *Phytophthora* resistance.

From the last five years of work, we have about 208 hybrid survivors from 35 different families. These trees are growing in *Phytophthora cinnamomi* infested clay on my Oconee County, S.C., farm. This represents a 3% long-term survival rate. Families vary greatly in their level of resistance. Eighty-four families have been tested thus far. Thirty-eight percent of families have absolutely no resistance and and all seedlings in these families die. The remaining 62% show survival rates from 1% to as high as 38%. Within the 35 different surviving families, we have represented about 80 different wild American trees from across the range having been used in their breeding. Some of the survivors started producing pollen and nuts last year. Using controlled pollinations from two parents that have shown *Phytophthora cinnamomi* resistance should boost the survival rate by a significant degree to 50% perhaps. If this occurs, the future will again look bright for the American chestnut below the 35th parallel.

A little background information. *Phytophthora cinnamomi* is not a fungus. Rather, it is an oomycete with its own phylum. Its closest relative is brown algae. *Phytophthoras* have cellulose cell walls like plants, while fungi have chitin cell walls like that in insect exoskeletons. There are probably 250 to 450 species worldwide in this ancient phylum. There are currently 77 identified species, and about one "new" species a month is discovered somewhere in the world.

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# Spreading the pollen business

**By Steve Barilovits**
**Charlotte, N.C.**

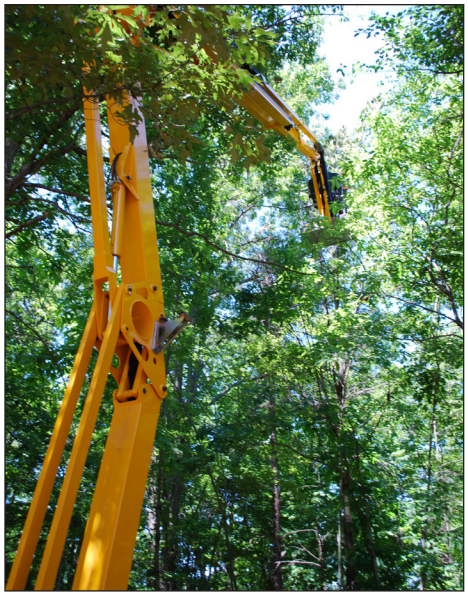
In June of 2008, we collected pollen from five surviving American chestnuts growing in low elevation locations in the Piedmont. When the trees are relatively small, say less than 10 feet tall, we can cut catkins from the trees using hand pruners. When the catkins are within 30 feet of the ground, we can get them by using cutters on long extension poles. But for the large, tall American survivors, the catkins can be 60 feet to 80 feet from the ground at the edge of the tree's canopy. Climbing to reach the catkins in these tall trees is usually impractical, except in the rare cases when several larger trees are close enough so that an expert climber can install rope rigging between trees to enable the climber to reach the catkins.

If the larger trees are very close to a passable road, the catkins can sometimes be reached from a bucket truck. But many trees are not near a road, or a road passable for a bucket truck. Last year, we contracted with Wade Williams, the owner of Quality Tree and Landscaping of Wilson, N.C., to provide a 70-foot SP64 4x4 Nifty Lift (a compact articulated four-wheel drive self-propelled lift) and operating crew to help us collect catkins from large trees in Pilot Mountain State Park and on private land near Sandy Ridge, N.C.

On June 24, 2008, I met Wade and his crew at Pilot Mountain, and within 15 minutes, they unloaded the lift from its trailer, and we were on our way through the woods to reach the first tall chestnut tree. Another 10 to 15 minutes was required to unfold the outriggers and balance the lift, and then we were on our way up 60 feet to get the catkins through a pretty dense surrounding canopy. Because of the mobility of the lift boom, we needed only a few minutes in the canopy to collect all the catkins. We then came down, folded the boom and the outriggers and reloaded the lift onto its trailer. Then we were on our way to Sandy Ridge to repeat the operation on trees there. I haven't seen a more efficient way to collect catkins.

The pollen we obtained from the catkins we reached with the lift was used to produce 344 BC4 hybrid nuts on trees at Meadowview. We also produced another 184 BC4 hybrid nuts from surviving American chestnuts that we could reach without the equipment. These seeds will be planted in several new chapter orchards this spring. They are the beginning of our chapter's lines of hybrid chestnuts parented by low elevation southern American chestnuts.

*Equipment arrives at Pilot Mountain State Park; a mobile four-wheel drive lift heads into the woods; lift outriggers are deployed and balanced; 60 feet in the air collecting chestnut catkins. Collections done under permit from N.C. Park Service.*



# Fall meeting and orchard tours

**By Doug Gillis**
**Charlotte, N.C.**

Saturday, November 8, 2008, the Board of Directors of the Carolinas Chapter convened its meeting at the Sandy Mush Community Center in Leicester, N.C., at 10 in the morning.

Later in the morning as the board conducted business, chapter members began arriving for a noon meal and scheduled afternoon orchard tours.

As the board conducted business, locals also gathered at the community center to participate in a turkey shoot. Each seconding of a motion of the board that morning seemed to be punctuated by a blast from a shotgun fired outside the building.

After sharing lunch, 20 members arranged transportation and drove through the Sandy Mush Valley to Don Myers' and Susan Wilson's property to tour the backcross chestnut orchard they maintain. The orchard is doing well despite the invasion of naturally occurring blight and the marauding of their horse that got loose in the orchard and damaged a tree or two.

Some trees in the orchard flowered in the spring and cross-pollinated with other nearby trees to produce chestnuts.

Fallen leaves, burs and nuts were collected by the group and given to board member Joe James, who later delivered them to researchers at Clemson University for use in the biochemical analysis of hybrid chestnuts.

While on the tour of the Myers/Wilson orchard, Dr. Patricia DeCoursey told the group of her having met Dr. Arthur Graves, one of the first chestnut researchers for whom the Graves lines of trees in the orchard is named. You can read of her memories of Dr. Graves in an article in this newsletter.

*Chapter members at Winterberry Farm in western North Carolina in November 2008. Patricia DeCoursey is third from the right in the front row.*

The group then traveled to Newfound Mountain, situated south of Sandy Mush Valley and north of Canton, N.C.

Brad and Sheli Stanback had arranged for the group to tour an orchard they maintain at their Winterberry Farm. The orchard tour there was just as educational as was the tour of the Myers/Wilson Orchard.

Upon entering the orchard, the group was delighted to see a cabin, constructed of hand-hewn American chestnut logs, which Brad Stanback recently restored on the property. At the end of the tour, members were treated to a drink of freshly pressed apple cider.

The Stanbacks' daughter, Ilona, had collected apples from trees growing adjacent to the chestnut orchard. She pressed them, collected the juice, and served a sample to members.

The chestnut orchards are a delight for members and their guests. More tours are scheduled for the fall of 2009. You will be notified of when the tours are scheduled this fall. Be sure to join in the fun.

*On the left, Ilona pressing apples in an old style cider press. On the right, an old North Carolina mountain cabin moved to Winterberry Farm and restored by Brad Stanback.*

# Cataloochee Ranch: The perfect spot

**By Judy Coker**
**Cataloochee Ranch, N.C.**

At an average elevation of about 5,000 feet, the lands of Cataloochee Ranch above Maggie Valley, N.C., have long been chestnut-friendly.

The giant trees populated the mountain sides and ridge tops, growing mostly on the south to southeastern slopes and along the prominent ridges. But by the 1950s, the old trees were all gone, leaving only white skeletons standing in their place, waiting to fall to the forest floor.

However, because the roots of a chestnut tree do not succumb to the awful blight as long as it stays in the ground, we have been blessed with a multitude of sprouts coming up from the original parent tree.

Many of these sprouts have gotten old enough to produce seeds of their own before they, too, die.

In early June of 2006, I happened on a large chestnut tree almost ready to bloom, a large tree about 12" DBH. I called the Asheville office of The American Chestnut Foundation and Paul Sisco came out to the Ranch to take a look at the tree. He also saw the hill behind the ranch house and it was decided that we would put a chestnut orchard there.

So in the spring of 2007, we plowed and prepped the soil. Then, with volunteers from both parties, we planted 284 seeds of various ancestry.

My, how they have prospered! We have lost a total of 25 seedlings, for a 91% survival rate. Our guests at the ranch are very interested in the project.

They ask good questions and walk through the little trees almost every day. The orchard is an illustration of what Cataloochee is all about -- a place to admire and wonder at nature's handiwork.

*The Cataloochee Ranch in Maggie Valley, N.C., in August 2008. The chestnut seedlings are in their second year of growth. There is a 91% survival rate of the 284 chestnuts planted.*

## HARVEST
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The third is more rare, but potentially lethal -- the rocky spoil areas in which the chestnuts have sprouted is prime timber rattlesnake habitat.

We retained about 600 of the wild harvested nuts for *Phytophthora* and *Phythophthora* control experiments being performed within our chapter.

Fifty nuts were delivered to an archeaology professor at UNC-Wilmington (along with the chestnut weevils larvae that grow in the some of the nuts) to help with research into pre-European American cultures by analyzing protein remnants in archaic pottery shards. The remainder were donated to the national foundation.

While obtaining the wild chestnuts is difficult, getting the controlled pollination nuts is much more expensive and arduous. In Meadowview's mother tree program, we obtain pollen from wild trees, transport it to Meadowview and pollinate female flowers on selected mother trees there.

We then go to Meadowview in the fall to harvest the nuts produced from our late spring pollinations.

While this is an expensive and time consuming process, it is three times less expensive that the alternative. That would require us to operate in the canopy of our wild trees three times each year: first to bag the female flowers, second to pollinate them with pollen from father trees at Meadowview and finally to harvest nuts.

This mother tree program also allows us to produce many more nuts than we could otherwise because male flowers (catkins) are more prevalent and easier to access.

Blight-stressed wild trees will produce many male flowers and almost no female flowers at a young age, just before they die.

In 2008, we harvested 632 controlled pollination nuts; 530 were B4F1 nuts from five pure, wild American male parents. These nuts will be planted in new chapter breeding orchards this spring. Another 102 were B2 and B3 nuts with *Phytophthora*-screened male parents on Joe James' farm. The seedlings grown from these nuts will be tested in Joe's *Phytophthora* resistance screening this year.

*Carolinas Chapter members and guests gathered at Hanging Rock State Park for the 2008 annual meeting.*

# Calling enthusiastic volunteers

**By Carol Namkoong**
**Sandy Mush, N.C.**

Thank you for being a member of the Carolinas Chapter of The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF). Your membership supports the research of our chapter and the national organization. But help is needed! Some of our members have orchards in locations throughout the range of our chapter, and could use some help with weeding, fertilizing, and other chores. Joe James in Seneca, S.C., is doing great research towards developing resistance in chestnuts to *Phytophthora cinnamomi*, which causes the lethal ink disease in the southern range of the chestnut, and he can often use a hand (or a computer guru). Members of our chapter have gone to Meadowview, Va., in the spring to help with pollination and also in the fall to help with harvesting. Volunteers to serve on the Board of Directors are also very welcome.

The Carolinas Chapter of The American Chestnut Foundation was organized in 2000 as a 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation. The official bylaws were adopted on July 25, 2000. The complete bylaws are on our website at www.carolinas-tacf.org. The chapter was officially recognized by the National TACF in October 2000. Can you believe that our 10th anniversary is coming up in 2010?

The mission of the chapter is "to assist in the work of The American Chestnut Foundation in bringing about a revival and a renewal of the American chestnut tree as a prominent part of the forests and communities of the United States of America by strengthening the organization's financial and membership base, education, public awareness, and research activities." The major emphasis of the chapter has been research, education and breeding efforts to develop a blight-resistant and *Phytophthora*-resistant source of the American chestnut tree.

The Carolinas Chapter is required by the bylaws to hold one general membership meeting each year, which we usually convene in the late summer or autumn. Each year at this meeting, an election is held to select six members of the Board of Directors for a two-year term. All chapter members present at the annual meeting are eligible to vote in this election. Candidates for membership are nominated by a committee of the board, or by submission from members prior to the annual meeting. You can nominate someone for the board by contacting any current board member, and self-nomination is encouraged.

At the annual meeting, we have scientific, historical, and cultural presentations from several speakers. This is also the time to meet other members and to learn more about our activities. In addition to the annual meeting, an orchard tour is also often planned in the fall to provide a look at the progress of the breeding research. This gives members an additional chance to participate.

The Board of Directors is required by the bylaws to hold at least one meeting each year in the spring, at which officers are elected. Other meetings are held as needed, with the business of the chapter, activities of the board members, and educational topics covered.

We encourage all members to attend at least one of the meetings each year, and hope that we will be able to increase participation in the future. Any suggestions for meeting sites, speakers, etc. are welcome.

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# RESISTANCE

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All species of *Phytophthora* have their own specific requirements for climate – like maximum and minimum temperatures and available moisture.

So why now is *Phytophthora* suddenly a problem for the American chestnut? There was a major decline of the American chestnut before the one caused by the chestnut blight.

This was ink disease, caused by *Phytophthora cinnamomi*, which was introduced to North America in the late 1700s or early 1800s.

Trees in the southern range started dying in the early 1800s.

There was widespread death at lower elevations in the southeastern states.

Then chestnut blight, caused by the fungus *Cryphonectria parasitica*, was introduced into the U.S. in the early 1900s, and all but eliminated the remaining chestnut trees from the eastern forests.

The importance of *Phytophthora cinnamomi* to chestnut restoration in the southeast had to be rediscovered. Ten to 15 years after the founding of The American Chestnut Foundation, hybrid seeds carrying blight resistance were planted in the field.

In the southeastern states, root rot killed a high percentage of seedlings in the first years of growth. *P. cinnamomi* was confirmed as the pathogen in 2003 at the Chestnut Return Farm.

*Joe James and Fred Hebard discuss selections for* Phytophthora *resistance in hybrid chestnut seedlings at Chestnut Return Farm.*

*Dr. Steve Jeffers of Clemson University shows chapter member Steve Barilovits IV what good resistance to* Phytophthora *in a hybrid chestnut seedling looks like.*

The objectives of the program at Chestnut Return are to evaluate hybrid seedlings for resistance to *P. cinnamomi*, to identify families with high levels of resistance, and to create a resistant population of trees for future breeding efforts.

The screening program has been carried every year since 2004. Each spring, seeds are planted in April in 568-liter plastic tubs filled with Fafard 3B soil-less mix. The seeds germinate, and then in July, the plantings are inoculated with two isolates of *P. cinnamomi* originally obtained from Chestnut Return. Plants begin dying approximately 21 days later.

In December, the plants are pulled out, their roots examined, and then scored for resistance.

The better survivors are planted in an orchard and in later years evaluated for field performance.

In general, American chestnut seedlings were consistently susceptible and died. Chinese chestnut seedlings were consistently resistant and grew well in the tubs.

Chinkapin seedlings were 100% susceptible. Hybrid seedlings varied in susceptibility, but more were susceptible than resistant.

We've tested 43 hybrid families from the tub screenings to field trials of survivors; 189 seedlings have been planted in the orchard, and to date, 77 have survived.

This is 40.7% of those planted in the orchard, and 4.5% of the total number of seedlings evaluated in the tubs. Some hybrid seedlings selected for blight resistance also carry resistance to *P. cinnamomi*.

Genes for resistance to blight and *P. cinnamomi* do not appear to be linked.

*P. cinnamomi* is not a localized problem in the southeastern states. It may be spotty or localized north of the Mason-Dixon Line, or above 2,000 feet elevation in the South.

With better extraction techniques than are available today, I think it could be isolated from almost every shovelful of soil below the 40$^{th}$ parallel and below 2,000 feet.

If you find one or more American chestnut sprout, you can be assured the *P. cinnamomi* is not present in the immediate area.

Healthy rhododendron is an excellent indicator for the absence of the pathogen. I have never found a single American chestnut seedling that survived for more than three years in the presence of *P. cinnamomi*.

Loose, well-drained soil on dry sites, or high organic content are no guarantee against *P. cinnamomi*, which does not require wet or swampy conditions to thrive. Freezing or thoroughly drying soil seems to eliminate metabolically active propagules.

# 2008 Annual meeting

**By Doug Gillis**
**Charlotte, N.C.**

Thirty-four Carolinas Chapter members and guests gathered on August 16 at the Welcome Center at Hanging Rock State Park for the 2008 annual meeting.

Guest speakers were Noah Reynolds and Eddie Barr, who gave a slide show presentation entitled "Devotion: A History of the Reynolds Estate in Surry County, N.C." Richard J. Reynolds and Elizabeth, his wife, developed the Devotion Estate as a rural retreat with working dairy, beef cattle, and other farm operations.

During seven years of the Great Depression, 1933 to 1939, 300 locals were employed in the construction of buildings and facilities on the estate.

Many of the buildings were constructed using lumber from American chestnut trees that had fallen on the property. Buildings at Devotion are covered in finely milled and finished chestnut weatherboards stained a dark color. Discussed, too, were the efforts of Charles McKinney of Raleigh, N.C., who purchased a key portion of the estate in the 1990s and spent the last 10 years of his life restoring more than a dozen buildings and structures on the property. His restoration efforts preserved the rustic architectural style characteristic of the original buildings.

A home movie made by Richard J. Reynolds, Jr. depicting life at Devotion Estate was shown.

Steve Barilovits and Joe James gave reports on their *Phytophthora* experiments. Steve is conducting his experiments on his property in Charlotte, and Joe at his farm, Chestnut Return, located near Seneca, S.C. Paul Sisco gave an overview of the national and chapter breeding programs for blight resistance.

Election of six chapter board members for two year terms was unanimous. Five of the six were reappointed. The new member, Ron Myers, who previously had served as a board member and chapter president, replaced K.O. Summerville who retired from the board at the August meeting. K.O. received a certificate of recognition from the board which acknowledged and thanked him for his many years of service to the organization.

During the "Members Sharing" portion of the program, Paul Dunn, born February 25, 1919, told how he as a child helped collect chestnuts from the forest floor and later, as a teenager, worked at a sawmill to harvest sound wormy chestnut wood. He described how he ate American chestnuts by cracking the hull in his mouth, peeling it off, and eating the nut raw.

Member Bill Wood, born February 1931, told of having been raised on a farm in the Mitchell River Valley near Devotion Estate. He read a poignant story he had written about the felling of a gigantic, ghost American chestnut tree 300 yards from his family's home that had stood for nearly 20 years after its death from blight. His father, uncle, and brothers felled the tree and harvested its wood to sell for lumber in hopes that the revenue would pay the mortgage on the farm for another year.

Member Doug Gillis described how he helped his friend David Terpening of Charlotte identify two-inch thick planks that he recently had acquired as American chestnut wood. David, a wood turner, used a portion of the wood to make several attractive bowls. Doug displayed the bowls for other members to admire.

*At the top, Bill Wood after telling the story from his boyhood, "The Chestnut Ghost," set near the Devotion Estate. Above, K.O. Summerville retired from the board, with Ron Myers taking his place. Summerville received a certificate for his service.*

*North Carolina First Lady Mary Easley studies an American chestnut tree planted in her and her father's honor.*

# N.C. first lady dedicates chestnut

**By Meghan Jordan**
**Asheville, N.C.**

North Carolina First Lady Mary Easley joined members of The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF) and the Governor's Western Residence Board of Directors at a ceremony to dedicate an American chestnut tree planted at the residence in her and her father's honor.

The ceremony was held on June 20 on the grounds of the Governor's Western Residence (45 Patton Mountain Road) in Asheville.

Paul Sisco planted the tree at the residence in early spring of 2008.

The tree was donated by TACF, a nonprofit organization with more than 6,000 members nationally and internationally and chapters in 17 states.

# Congrats on your retirement, Paul!

**By Doug Gillis**
**Charlotte, N.C.**

Dr. Paul Sisco retired on December 31, 2008, from his position as Southern Appalachian Regional Science coordinator with The American Chestnut Foundation. He currently serves on the Board of Directors of TACF.

Paul is also a board member with the Carolinas Chapter-TACF. Paul will continue doing research work funded through grants he receives.

Paul was hired as a plant geneticist in 1997 by TACF, where, among other projects, he worked to plant hybrid chestnut seedlings throughout North Carolina. He also worked with homeowners to develop stands of pure American chestnut stock and published articles on the subject of breeding blight-resistant American chestnut trees. *Blue Ridge Country Magazine* called him "the Johnny Appleseed of chestnut culture."

In retirement, though he will be busy, we all hope plenty of sunshine heads Paul's way, that Mister Bluebird's always on his shoulder, and that everything in Paul's future is satisfactory.

*Paul Sisco at Winterberry Farm with a bluebird box presented to him in November, 2008, by the Carolinas Chapter. Paul retired from the American Chestnut Foundation. The box was crafted by Doug Gillis out of old American chestnut wood.*

*Belk Scholars from Davidson College in Davidson, N.C., participated in a ceremonial planting of several advanced hybrid American chestnuts on the Davidson campus on March 28, 2009. The College alumni, students, and high school seniors gathered to plant the trees in honor of John M. Belk, Davidson class of 1943. The trees are B2F3s, raised by Hill Craddock at the University of Tennessee - Chattanooga. The planting was organized by Irvin Brawley, the director of grounds and property management at Davidson.*
*Photos courtesy of Davidson College.*

## Carolinas Chapter Endowment Fund

Donations can be made at any time.
Make checks payable to "CC-TACF" and note on check: "For CC-TACF Endowment Fund."
Mail to: CC-TACF Endowment Fund, c/o Steve Barilovits
2009 Belvedere Ave.
Charlotte, NC 28205

CAROLINAS CHAPTER
THE AMERICAN CHESTNUT FOUNDATION

Chestnut Mast Carolinas Chapter of TACF
c/o Steve Barilovits 2009 Belvedere Ave.
Charlotte, NC 28205