



Maryland Chapter of The American Chestnut Foundation Summer 2026 Newsletter



Jeff White is President of the Maryland Chapter of the American Chestnut Foundation

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Hello Maryland, Delaware, and DC Chestnutters!

We are finally getting a break with the end of pollination season! This is the time of year when we bag female flowers and then return a week later to hand-pollinate them—the definition of controlled pollination.

The spring freeze on April 21 damaged the new growth that had started because of the abnormally warm weather in early April. Luckily, our trees recovered and produced new flowers. However, the number of nuts produced will be lower than normal.

We will be collecting chestnuts throughout the month of September. We will collect the nuts from the controlled pollinations we made in June, which will go into our breeding program, along with thousands of open-pollinated nuts. The open-pollinated nuts will be used to start seedlings or for roasting at our fall events.

2026 Maryland Chapter Fall Meeting & Festival

Our fall meeting and festival will be held on **Sunday, October 18, from 1:00 to 6:00 PM** at:

Milkhouse Brewery
8253 Dollyhyde Road
Mt. Airy, Maryland 21771

Come join us for an afternoon of chestnuts, conversation, and fun!

2026 American Chestnut Symposium & Fall Meeting: *Restoration Now!*

Next up is the **2026 American Chestnut Symposium & Fall Meeting: *Restoration Now!***, taking place November 6–7 in Greenbelt, Maryland, at the Crowne Plaza.

Crowne Plaza Greenbelt
6400 Ivy Lane
Greenbelt, MD 20770

That's right—the national meeting is going to be held locally!

[2026 American Chestnut Symposium information](#)

More details, updates, and fun chestnut stuff can be found below.

We hope to see you this fall!

NEWS FLASH!!! NEWS FLASH!!!

Join Us for the Maryland Chapter Fall Meeting & 2nd Annual Maryland American Chestnut Festival!

Join fellow American Chestnut enthusiasts for an afternoon of learning, fellowship, and celebration of our efforts to restore this iconic American tree. The event is **free and family-friendly**, and everyone interested in American Chestnuts is welcome.

Event Details

Date: Sunday, October 18, 2026
Time: 1:00 PM – 6:00 PM
Location: Milkhouse Brewery
8253 Dollyhyde Road
Mt. Airy, MD 21771

Admission: FREE — and family-friendly!

Featured Demonstrations

- How to Plant and Care for a Chestnut Seedling — or Any Tree Seedling
- How to Roast Chestnuts
- How to enjoy our own unique chestnut lager

Agenda

12:00 PM – Pre-meeting setup
12:30–1:00 PM – Maryland Chapter Business Meeting
1:00–1:30 PM – Demonstration: How to Plant a Chestnut Seed or Seedling
1:30–5:30 PM – Enjoy good conversation with fellow chestnut enthusiasts, seedling sales, and chapter apparel sales - and don't forget our 2026 chestnut lager!!!!
5:30–6:00 PM – Wrap-up

The meeting and festival will be held in the **covered pavilion**.

Milkhouse Brewery opens at **1:00 PM** and will feature a **food truck** and a **special tap of their chestnut lager**. Come enjoy the great company, learn more about American Chestnuts, and talk chestnuts with fellow enthusiasts!

For more information about the brewery, visit [Milkhouse Brewery](#).

Have questions about chestnuts? Contact the Maryland Chapter of The American Chestnut Foundation at MDChapter@tacf.org.

We look forward to seeing you there!

Bring your family, bring your questions, and bring your enthusiasm for the American Chestnut!



The Maryland Chapter ball caps will be available for purchase.



We will have a limited quantity of chapter apparel for sale, including, hoodies, t-shirts, and ball caps.

Our Feature Article this month is "Ancestral Americans" by frequent contributor Tony Sutton

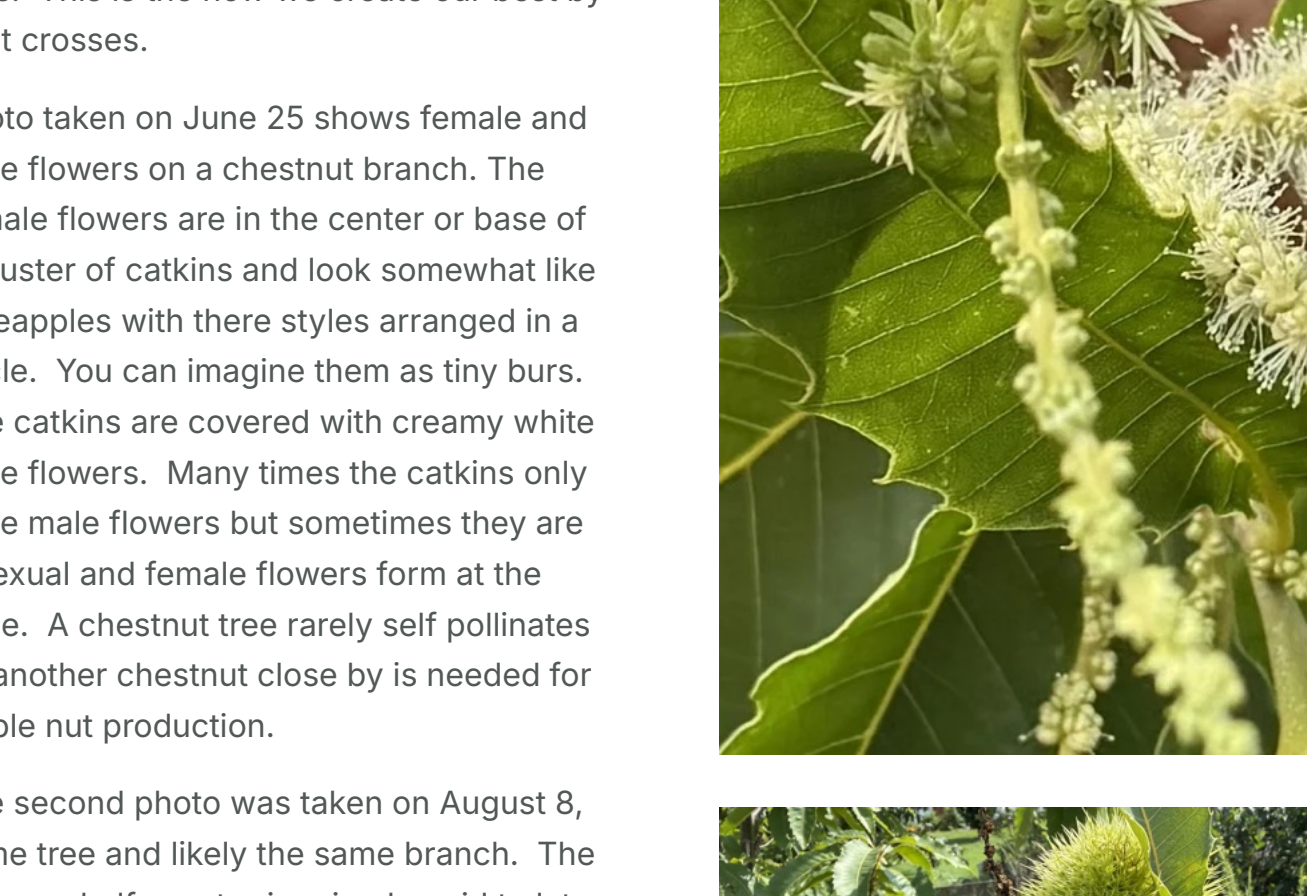
Ancestral Americans

TACF's main strategy is to hybridize trees that feature enough genes from Chinese chestnuts to survive the blight while deriving most genes from American chestnuts adapted to thrive in local forests. To create such hybrids, we needed flowers and pollen from American trees.

MDTACF has used 44 wild American trees from Maryland as ancestors of the trees planted in our orchards. Our ongoing progress rests on the earlier efforts of volunteers to locate these wild trees in forests and farmsteads, build relationships with landowners, and gather their pollen and seeds.

We did well to incorporate genes from our state when they were available, as many of the ancestral Americans in Maryland died in the years since we harvested from them. As a result of our timely efforts, MDTACF orchards contain nearly 2,000 trees that are the first- and second-generation offspring of wild Americans from Maryland. Orchards in other states include still more descendants of Maryland trees, just as our orchards mix ancestry from other states.

Wild American Chestnut Trees Known to MDTACF specifying trees with descendants alive in Maryland orchards



Wild American chestnut trees from many locations in Maryland, marked by green diamonds on this map, were the ancestors of trees currently in TACF orchards.

Maryland's contribution of wild American ancestry helps ensure that eventual restoration-ready hybrids will have traits appropriate to our region, such as leafing out at the ideal time each spring. For context, researchers identified [three geographic subpopulations](#) of American chestnuts. Most of Maryland lies in the central region, although our Garrett County highlands host trees more akin to those in the northeastern region.

Our chapter's contribution also helps avoid inbreeding within TACF's hybridization program. Earlier backcross plans used to include 20 different American ancestors from each state (see, for example, [seed orchard designs as of 2014](#)), and the [current RGS plan](#) only considers cross-pollinating genes if they are as genetically distant from each other as third cousins.

Other wild chestnut trees are waiting to be discovered. Most naturally occurring chestnuts are groundlings and resprouts, but some have survived long enough to flower and produce burs. TACF invites you to [submit a leaf sample](#) and locator form if you find a wild chestnut we should know about. MDTACF's own Gary Carver examines these samples to determine which species they represent. TACF also published a [video guide](#) to using phone apps to locate trees in public hiking areas, if you simply want to visit wild chestnuts.

A Visit to Lesesne State Forest

I recently had the opportunity, along with fellow MDTACF member **Mark Hendricks**, to visit **Lesesne State Forest in Virginia**, home to what is the **oldest and largest experimental planting of American Chestnut (*Castanea dentata*) trees in the eastern United States**.

The site is managed through a partnership between **The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF)** and the **Virginia Department of Forestry** and serves as an important research site in the effort to revive and restore the American Chestnut.

During our visit, **John Scrivani of the Virginia Chapter of TACF** and **Cassie Stark of TACF** generously took time from their busy schedules to give Mark and me an informative and fascinating tour of the forest and experimental plantings.

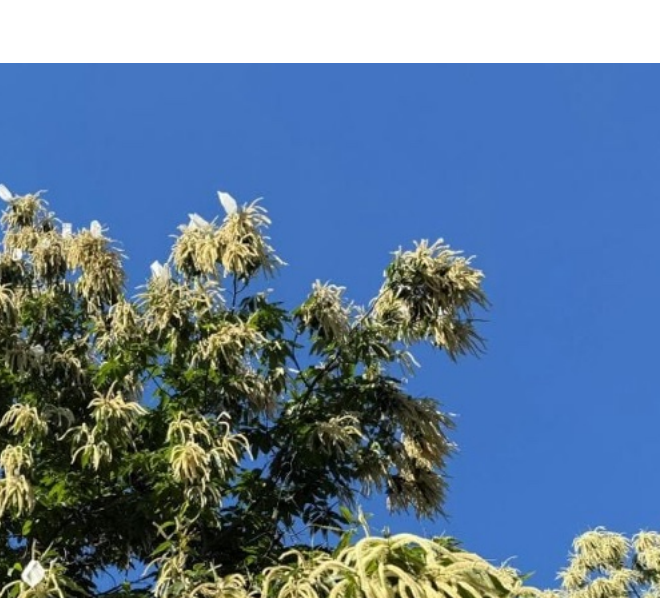
We greatly appreciate John and Cassie sharing their knowledge, experience, and time with us. Visits like this are a wonderful reminder of the importance of collaboration among TACF chapters and the many people working toward the restoration of this iconic American tree.



Chestnut orchard at Lesesne state forest. Left to right is Mark Hendricks, John Scrivani, Cassie Stark



Standing next to a tree name Gladly, a best tree and one I have multiple seedlings from.



"Thompson" is a large American chestnut that was grafted in 1980.

Orchard News...

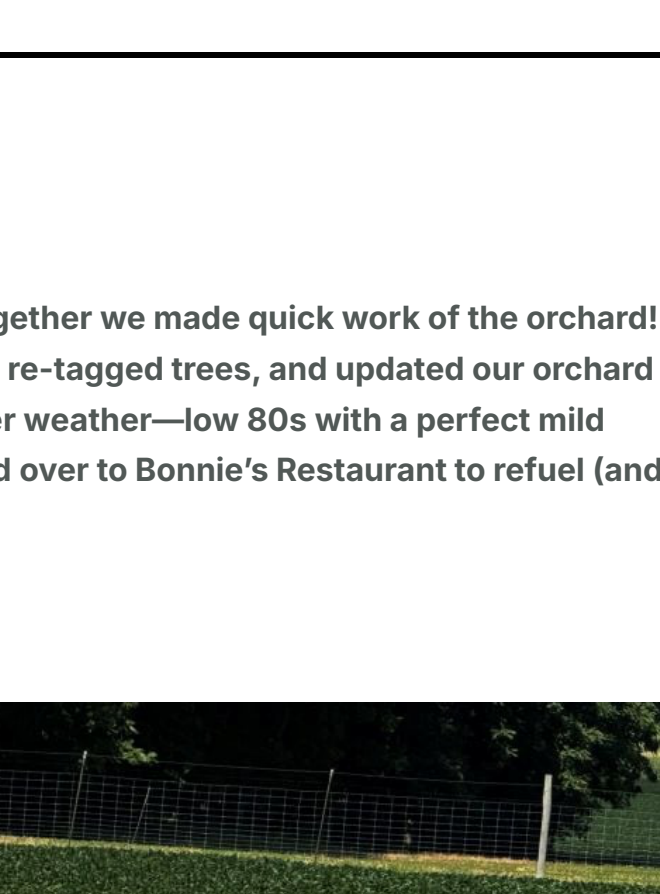
Pollination season in Maryland begins in June with scouting trips to the orchards with our best trees to see when the female flowers are ready to be bagged. We bag the female flowers to make sure they are they are not fertilized by random pollen.

After bagging we return in about 12 days to pollinate the bagged flower by hand using pollen from our best trees. We replace the bags over the flowers which will hopefully develop into viable nuts for planting. In September we will return and collect the nuts. This is the how we create our best by best crosses.

Photo taken on a June 25 shows female and male flowers on a chestnut branch. The female flowers are in the center or base of a cluster of catkins and look somewhat like pineapples with there styles arranged in a circle. You can imagine them as tiny burs. The catkins are covered with creamy white male flowers. Many times the catkins only have male flowers but sometimes they are bisexual and female flowers form at the base. A chestnut tree rarely self pollinates so another chestnut close by is needed for viable nut production.

The second photo was taken on August 8, same tree and likely the same branch. The burs are half way to ripening by mid to late September.

This tree already had new but tender growth when the freeze occurred here on April 21. The fact that it could regrow produce flowers and develop nuts is an example of how important this tree is to our ecosystem. The nearby fruit trees and pecan did not regrow flowers.

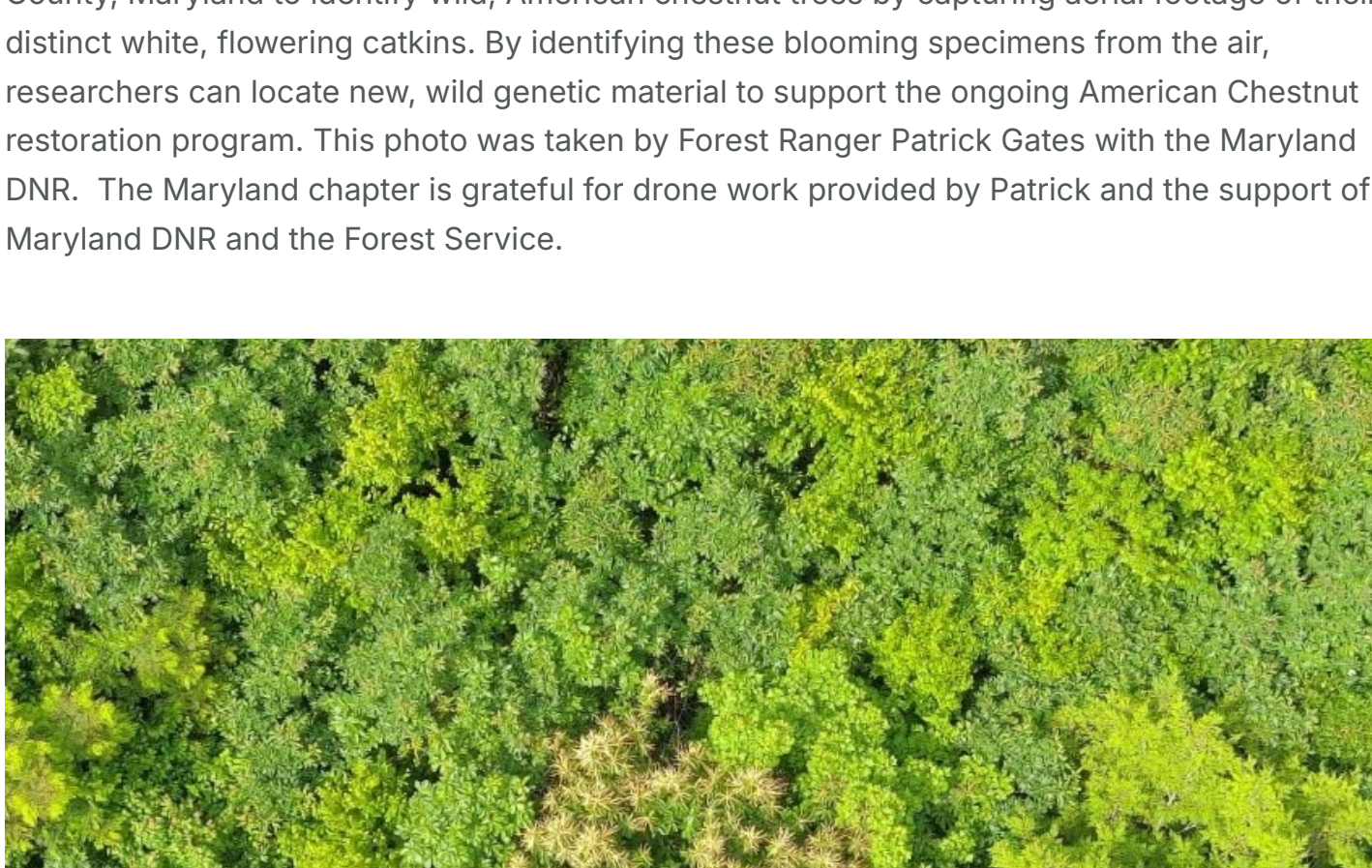


Monocacy Orchard Pollination Day

On June 16 Members and volunteers of the Maryland Chapter hand pollinated 4 of our best performing trees and collected pollen from 10 trees that will be frozen for future use. We used approximately 150 bags, a bag usually goes over multiple flowers at the end of a branch.



Volunteers at the Monocacy orchard getting the overall plan.



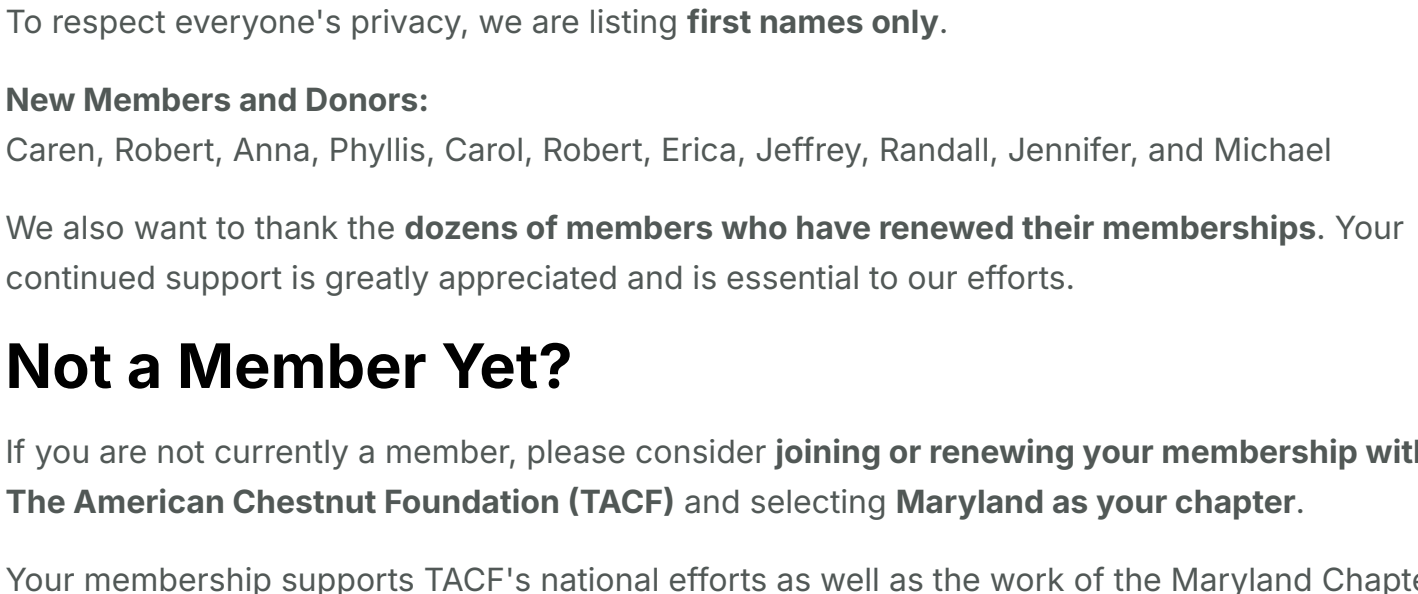
Volunteers getting detailed instructions.



We use a lift bucket to reach the highest flowers

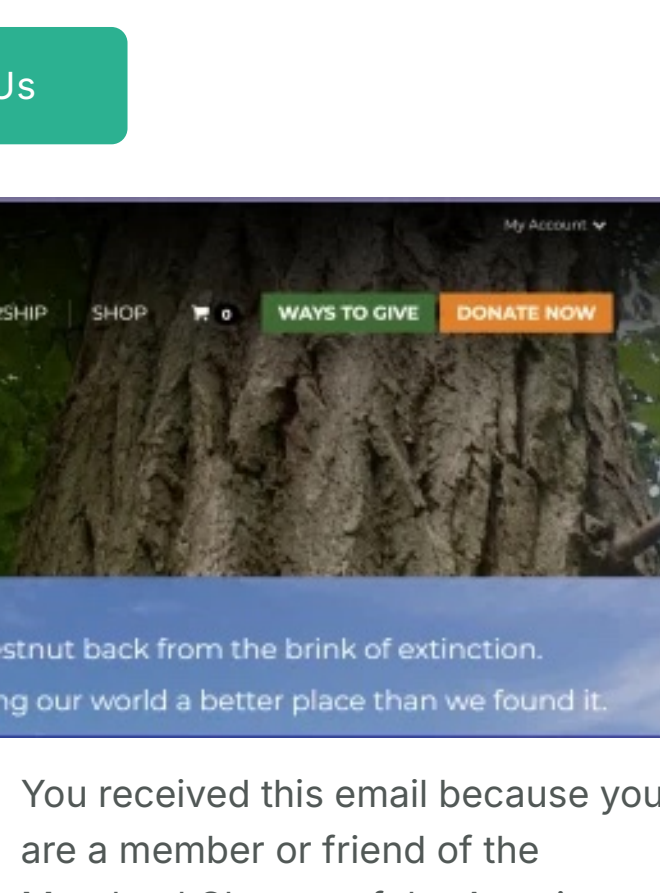


This tree is an over performer when it comes to flowering



Bagged flower at the Top. Many times the majority of flowers are near the top on larger trees.

We also had pollinated (bagged) trees at our WSSC, Thorpewood, and Black Hill Orchards. Here member and volunteer Mark Hendricks is hand pollinating trees at Black Hill.



A Special Thank You to Our Members and Donors

In closing, we would like to thank all of our **new members and donors who joined or supported us in January**. We are running a little behind on our reports, so please let me know if your name was accidentally missed. Sometimes membership reports are delayed, and we want to make sure everyone receives the recognition they deserve.

To respect everyone's privacy, we are listing **first names only**.

New Members and Donors:

Caren, Robert, Anna, Phyllis, Carol, Robert, Erica, Jeffrey, Randall, Jennifer, and Michael

We also want to thank the **dozens of members who have renewed their memberships**. Your continued support is greatly appreciated and is essential to our efforts.

Not a Member Yet?

If you are not currently a member, please consider **joining or renewing your membership with The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF)** and selecting **Maryland as your chapter**.

Your membership supports TACF's national efforts as well as the work of the Maryland Chapter to bring the American Chestnut back to our forests.

Your donations make a local difference. They help the Maryland Chapter establish and maintain local seed and research orchards, providing important resources for the restoration of this iconic American tree.

Thank you for being part of the effort to **Bring Back the American Chestnut!** 🌱🍂

Join Us

Maryland Chapter of the American Chestnut Foundation

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