

Maryland Chapter of The American Chestnut Foundation

Winter 2024-25



MARYLAND CHAPTER

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President's Message



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

It is about time for a newsletter from the Maryland Chapter. With honor and enthusiasm, I would like to introduce myself as the recently elected president of the Maryland Chapter of The American Chestnut

Foundation (TACF). One of my pursuits is to ask you to join us as a friend, volunteer, and if possible, with membership or donation to TACF and our chapter. You can easily join by following the link below to the TACF website:
<https://support.tacf.org/membership>

If you have time, we are always looking for volunteers. The easiest way to sign up as a volunteer is through the TACF website:
<https://tacf.org/volunteer/>

We are planning seasonal newsletters to let our chapter members and friends know what is happening at the local level. We will keep you informed of upcoming events, the state of our orchards, volunteer opportunities, state of the science, and everything chestnut related.

My background...

I grew up in Baltimore County in the piedmont surrounded by woodlands. My dad taught me early on to identify trees and our woods were full of chestnuts sprouts. As many of us have, I became passionate about the tree and the work to return chestnuts to the eastern deciduous forest. I have always followed TACF and everything I could find on restoring the American Chestnut.

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I remember In March of 2007 participating in a nut grafting clinic at Tom and Elaine Scrivener's home near Smithsburg Maryland. I still have handwritten notes from Carl Mayfield who instructed us. One of the grafts I made that day survived and is planted at my home in Carroll County. The tree has blight but still flowers every year. I have planted other chestnuts near the tree, all suffering from blight, but depending on their condition I usually get some nuts. This fall my wife found a chestnut seedling growing under the grafted tree, "hope springs eternal."

The trees in my yard are wild type Americans with little resistance. The hybrid trees in some of our orchards are doing much better and cannot help but make one feel confident in the future restoration of the American Chestnut.

We also welcome a new vice president, Trey Belew, along with new board member Dave Gordon. Dave is an assistant teaching professor of philosophy at Loyola University Maryland in Baltimore. His areas of specialization include the philosophy of evolutionary biology and environmental philosophy. He has had a lifelong interest in woodworking, carpentry, and trees, and has planted over 8,000 trees at his family cabin in northern Wisconsin (how many escaped the deer is another story). He is hoping one day to start a tree farm in Maryland or Virginia. On the first day of his Environmental Philosophy class, he gives a quiz testing basic ecological proficiency. The first question is: True or False – American Chestnut trees are one of the most abundant trees growing today in Appalachia. Eighty percent of the students marked True. Hopefully, one day it will be.

Kark Mech has stepped down from president and Bruce Levine from vice president. Both

have joined the board. Karl and Bruce have worked to make me welcome and provided much needed transfer of chapter knowledge. Everyone in the chapter that I have met has been welcoming and helpful. My sincere gratitude goes out to all the former officers, board members, members, and volunteers. Their tireless work gives me the opportunity to serve the chapter. I look forward to working with everyone and making progress on the process of restoring the American Chestnut to our forests.

Orchard News

Western Maryland Research and Education Center, University of Maryland, WMREC Orchard

Chapter volunteers started a new planting at the WMREC Orchard – Western Maryland Research and Education Center, University of Maryland. This new planting is part of a common garden study conducted by TACF at four separate locations in the chestnut's native range. It is one of four locations at which we planted multiple "best x best" hybrid seeds from multiple controlled crosses carried out at various TACF chapters. We expect some of these controlled crosses to perform better than previous hybrids, and we will be able to observe how these families compare to each other at each location.



Seedling maintenance crew at WMREC orchard, Jeff White, Bruce Levine, Bruce Brong, Jeff Strathern, Norm Hines



About 800 seed nuts planted at WMREC this past Spring, 2024

Replanting the Orchard at the Izaak Walton League in Rockville

On November 9, volunteers began replanting the orchard at the Izaak Walton League in Rockville. The previous orchard, which

preserved pure American chestnuts for breeding, was removed in 2022 because the trees had become too blighted. We will complete the replanting with seeds from other families this spring. The new orchard will be made up of Chinese American chestnut hybrids that will vary from about 50-80% American Chestnut ancestry and carry stronger resistance to chestnut blight. These trees will be useful as parents for TACF's recurrent genomic selection program.



Replanting the Orchard at the Izaak Walton League in Rockville. The people in the group photo: Tony Sutton, Cindy Stevens, Leo Levine, Gary Neubaum and Ron Kuipers. (Bruce Levine not shown).

WSSC3 Seed Orchard Planting

The Maryland chapter planted 23 seedlings that survived this summer's inoculations at the WSSC3 seed orchard on November 16. These individual survivors came mostly from three families that outperformed others in the chapter's 2024 small stem assay screening. If they continue to show superior resistance to chestnut blight in the field, they can be used as parents in future crosses.



*Planting at the WSSC3 orchard, project volunteers:
Ron Kuipers, Dave Gill, Lara Hause, Leo Levine, Bruce
Levine*



Planting at the WSSC3 orchard, Bruce Levine

Events and Outreach

Fall Meeting 2024

On September 28, 2024, we held our annual fall meeting at the Fox Haven Farm and Education Center in Jefferson, Maryland. Cassie Stark, Mid-Atlantic Regional Science Coordinator, gave a presentation about The American Chestnut Foundation's program of Recurrent Genomic Selection. Much more information can be found here

<https://taf.org/science-strategies/>

on TACF's research and breeding program. Following Cassie's presentation, we heard from Chapter President, Dr. Karl Mech, Vice President, Bruce Levine and Orchard Manager, Ron Kuipers. They informed us about the Chapter's current and future activities.



Fall 2024 membership meeting.

After lunch many of us toured the Fox Haven chestnut orchard. Prior to ending the meeting chestnuts and seedlings were handed out.



Visiting the Chestnut orchard at Fox Haven

Evaluating Small Stem Assay on Seedlings

On November 2nd Maryland Chapter members met at the University of Maryland Extension, Baltimore County to evaluate the small stem assays conducted on several hundred chestnut seedlings. Each seedling had been inoculated with the chestnut blight in July, and on this day each tree was evaluated for blight resistance by measuring and evaluating the stem cankers.



TACF members evaluating small stem assays on chestnut seedlings.

Volunteer Opportunities

Calling on any member experienced with bylaws for a small nonprofit! The chapter needs to update our bylaws and is looking for help, preferably legal, to make sure we meet the laws of the state.

Volunteers and Members needed!

The success of our breeding program is due to the support of many enthusiastic volunteers, including several members who serve as orchard stewards. We always could use more help, especially for orchard maintenance.

The big jobs include orchard maintenance throughout the year and harvesting around the end of September. Harvesting and preparing the nuts for winter storage is a lot of fun! Other tasks, such as orchard maintenance and tree culling, are scheduled periodically, mostly during the fall and winter.

Notice of planned events goes out by email to those volunteers who have indicated that they want to be on the list. The easiest way to get on the list is sign up on the TACF website: <https://tafcf.org/volunteer/>

You may also call or email me, Jeff White, 410-746-5768, Chestnutcreekfarm@gmail.com or Ron Kuipers at 240-838-9992, m_rkuipers@yahoo.com.

Upcoming

Maryland Chapter Spring Meeting

The Spring meeting of The Maryland Chapter of the American Chestnut Foundation will be at the **Gaithersburg Library, Meeting Room 3 on Saturday, April 26, from 10:30 - 2:30**

The meeting is free and open to the public.

The meeting will begin with an update on the TACF chestnut restoration program.

Our featured speaker will be Donald Edward Davis, scholar, former Fulbright fellow, and author of *The American Chestnut, An Environmental History*. The American Chestnut tells the story of the American Chestnut from Native American prehistory through present day efforts to restore the American Chestnut to its former place in the eastern deciduous forest. You do not want to miss this presentation and discussion.

<https://ugapress.org/author/donald-edward-davis/>

Register for our spring meeting here:

<https://theamericanchestnutfoundation.volunteerlocal.com/volunteer/?id=9570>

or you can email us at

MDTACF@outlook.com please include your full name. Registering will ensure we have adequate space.

Contacts and Social Media

For general information send email to MDtacf@outlook.com

To sign up as a volunteer. Your information will be passed on to the Maryland Chapter. <https://tacf.org/volunteer/>

Follow us on Facebook and Instagram

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/364144132079844>

<https://www.instagram.com/mdtacf/>

The Maryland Chapter on the American Chestnut Foundation Website
<https://tacf.org/md/about-us/>