

# The West Virginia Chapter of The American Chestnut Foundation NEWSLETTER



*In the heart of American chestnut's natural range*

June 2022

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## Resignation of Tom Saielli

Our Mid-Atlantic Research Science Coordinator, Tom Saielli submitted his resignation effective 30 April. The following is the letter he wrote to the four state chapters in his region, WV, VA, MD and KY.

**Dear members of the West Virginia Chapter Board:**

It is with mixed feelings that I inform you that after ten years with the American Chestnut Foundation I am stepping down as a Regional Science Coordinator. I have accepted a position with a local Virginia non-profit organization, Blue Ridge PRISM. I will make the transition at the end of April.

While I am looking forward to the next step in my career, I intend to remain an active member of TACF, and I plan to stay involved with both chapter and national activities. I will also work closely with Sara Fitzsimmons to find and train my replacement, ensuring a smooth transition.

Please plan to keep in touch! My personal email is tomsaielli@gmail.com. I'll provide a new phone number soon.

Thank you again for the wonderful years. I look forward to continued collaboration as I embark on the next chapter in my life.

Take care, all of you.

Kindest regards, Tom Saielli

Sara Fitzsimmons, TACF's Chief Conservation Officer, indicated that she will work with Tom to find a suitable replacement as soon as possible. There are several upcoming events that will require a Regional Science Coordinator, so we are hopeful for a quick replacement.

The WV chapter wishes Tom the best of luck in his new career.



## Outreach by Bernie and Linda Coyle

WV-TACF members, **Bernie and Linda Coyle** had a display at the WVU Extension / Master Gardener Seed Exchange at the Central Hampshire County park on Earth Day. Linda had seeds and a display of invasive plants along with an American chestnut display.



Linda Coyle stands in front of an American chestnut display.

## Germplasm Conservation Orchards

Members of the WV chapter have been busy in 2022 establishing new germplasm conservation orchards (GCOs) and adding to existing GCOs. While all of the native American chestnut trees planted in GCOs will become infected with the chestnut blight fungus, we hope about half will send up sprouts that will flower. It is the flowers from these native American chestnut trees that can then be pollinated with the TACF's advanced backcross material or the 'Darling 58' transgenic tree developed at the State University of New York. Trees in these GCOs are the first step in developing chestnut trees that have American form, resistance to the chestnut blight fungus and be adapted to West Virginia. Many thanks to all who helped with these plantings.

### **Chestnut Mountain Ranch (CMR) in Monongalia County.**

CMR is a beautiful 225-acre facility that fosters boys between the ages of 12 and 15. The boys arrive at CMR via many different issues but the goal of their 3-year stay is to provide them with a new outlook on life and an opportunity for a second chance. The boys are provided with many outdoor activities including hunting, gun safety, fishing and

fly-tying. It seemed only fitting to plant American chestnut seedlings at Chestnut Mountain Ranch. All 18 boys along with staff assisted with the planting.



Planting in front of the chapel at CMR.



Watering a newly planted seedling at CMR.

**Riggleman Planting in Pendleton County.** Glenn and Jeanie Riggleman enlisted help of family and friends to weed, mulch and replace dead seedlings at their 50-tree GCO outside Franklin. Their hard work makes their orchard almost "park-like" in appearance.



New mulch and weeding at the Pendleton County site.

**Old Hemlock Foundation in Preston County.** The mission of the Old Hemlock Foundation is to preserve and promote the legacy of **George Bird Evans** and his wife, **Kay**. George Bird Evans was an American illustrator, author, artist, sportsman and a breeder of English setter dogs. Evans had an exclusive contract with *Cosmopolitan* magazine in 1938 to illustrate mystery and detective stories. During WW II, Evans illustrated equipment repair manuals for aircraft. After the war, Evans settled at Old Hemlock and began breeding English setters that combined a dog's natural ability to handle ruffed grouse and the beauty Evans felt was lot in field trial dogs. The Old Hemlock Foundation works to preserve the natural environment by acquiring and maintaining ecologically significant undeveloped land, forests and other natural areas. Planting American chestnut seedlings fits perfectly with the works of the Old Hemlock Foundation. A group of 10 volunteers planted, mulched and watered 30 American chestnut seedlings along with building wire cages for each seedling to protect them from wildlife. Helping at the planting were: **Bill and Nora MacDonald, Robert Sybolt, Steve McClelland, Tim Frye, Bethany Belding, Amy Metheny, LeJay Graffious, Jim Hoadley and Mark and Mindy Double.**



Amy Metheny and Tim Frye display a caged tree.



Tim Frye, Bill MacDonald, Amy Metheny, LeJay Graffious, Bethany Belding, Jim Hoadley, Mindy Double, Steve McClelland and Nora MacDonald are pictured.

**Sutton Dam site in Braxton County.** A few members of the WV chapter assisted **Harrison Jenkins** and members of the Army Corps of Engineers to expand the GCO near the Sutton Dam at Bee Ridge. The 2021 GCO of 50 trees had 92% survival. In May 2022, an additional 36 American chestnut seedlings were planted making this the largest GCO in WV.



Amy Metheny, Danny Helmick, Jimmy Jenkins, David Rexrode and Harrison Jenkins pose after the planting.



Harrison Jenkins of the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers plants a seedling.



Amy Metheny (kneeling), David Rexrode and Jimmy Jenkins water seedlings at the Sutton Dam site.

**Village of Queens in Upshur County.** Queens is an unincorporated community in southern Upshur County,. **Walter Eiker** and **Chris Cartright** spearheaded a planting of an additional 30 native American seedlings during the first week of June. The GCO planted in Queens in 2021 had a remarkable survival of 87%. A crew of 15 (12 WV-TACF members and three volunteers) dug holes, assembled cages, planted, mulched and watered all 30 trees in under an hour. It was an extremely efficient crew, despite the fact that it rained hard at times during the planting. The weather did not slow down the crew. This site has some of the best soil of any GCO in the state (silt loam), so expectations are high for the 30 trees planted here.



Amy Metheny,, Mindy Double, Carla and Randy Kesling, Jerry Legg, Walter Eiker, Herman Burky, Lewis Cook, Chris Cartwright, Kyle Ellison and Blaise Hollot stand in the rain for a photograph after the completion of planting.

**University Forest in Preston County.** Just opposite Coopers Rock off Interstate 68 sits the University Forest, only 12 miles from Morgantown. The forest is managed to support programs in the Division of Forestry and Natural Resources under terms of a lease from the WV Division of Forestry. It is used as an outdoor laboratory and is the only state-owned experimental and reserach forest in the state. In 2021, 30 native American chestnut seedlings were planted in a cut-over section of the forest. Unfortunately only 11 survived the year. In June 2022, **Mark and Mindy Double** replaced 19 seedlings and part of the plot is pictured below. Better survival is hoped for in 2022.



## Leaf Bleaching

Thanks is given to **Dr. Sven Verlinden**, Director of the Division of Plant and Soil Sciences (WVU) and **Amanda Barth**, greenhouse manager, for allowing the WV chapter to raise, free of charge, 1300 chestnut seedlings in the greenhouse from mid-March until late May each year. Not all TACF chapters have such luxury. Some state chapters are unable to provide seedlings for their members as they do not have anywhere to raise seedlings at no or reduced cost.



Some of the 1300 seedlings in the WVU greenhouse in 2022.

Since the seedlings are grown in 4" pots, the roots generally fill the pot in two months. **Sara Fitzsimmons**, recommends 10" deep pots, but those deeper pots require stands which our chapter does not have. During mid-May, bleaching of the upper leaves was noticed in some of the seedlings. Sara felt this bleaching was due to a root that was trying to get down deeper into the pot but was unable due to the size of our pots. The affected leaves were the new leaves, not the older ones as seen in the

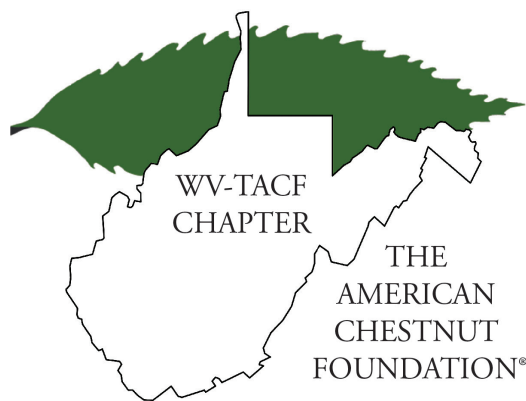


Bleaching of upper leaves shows good color in the veins but a lack of color in the leaf tissue.

above photo. Planting the seedlings into permanent sites will hopefully remedy this issue.

## New Chapter Logo

Many state chapters in TACF have a state logo. Up until now, the WV chapter did not have one. Thanks to **Nora MacDonald**, Professor Emeritus of Fashion, Dress and Merchandising at WVU, the WV chapter now has an official logo as seen below.



Nora's research interests include functional apparel design, clothing for older persons, and educational

pedagogy. She has published over 100 juried articles and abstracts and is the author of *Principles of Flat Design*, now in its fourth edition. She co-curated exhibits that explored the relationship between historic costume and contemporary apparel in the WVU Creative Arts Center, the Cultural Center in Charleston, historic homes through the Victorian Wheeling Landmarks Foundation and in the Zanesville Art Center in Zanesville, OH. Currently, she is in the process of co-authoring a book on clothing for older women. We are grateful for Nora's design capabilities!

The logo is not just for the chapter newsletter, but it can be embroidered onto shirts. **Sam Muncy**, WV-TACF's Treasurer, has agreed to take on the task of having shirts made for WV chapter members. The shirts are white polo shirts with a green chapter logo. The shirts are 65% polyester and 35% cotton. All sizes up to XL are \$25. Sizes XXL and up are \$27. Shirts can be picked up at the fall WV-TACF meeting in Rowlesburg (Sunday, October 9, 2022). If you prefer, the shirts can be mailed for \$37.95.

To order a shirt, send a check to:

**Sam Muncy**  
**606 Tacy Road**  
**Philippi, WV 26416-7455**

The cutoff date for ordering a shirt is **June 30**. The order is expected to be complete by the second week of July.