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### Archery Range, University Forest

The old archery range is located in the University Forest at the Coopers Rock exit off I-68 (Preston County). The area historically was a pine plantation, but the pines were rouged many years ago. In 2015, a 100-block of trees was planted with TACF's backcross trees (B<sub>3</sub>F<sub>3</sub>s). In 2016, another 100-block was planted from the 'Clapper' line from TACF's Duncan farm in Meadowview, VA. While these trees are all hybrids, they have a range of resistance. Some of the trees died a few years after planting. There are signs of active chestnut blight in the two stands, and a few trees have died back and are resprouting. Some trees, after 8 years, are 12'-14' tall. **Amy Metheny** with West Virginia University's Division of Land Engagement has been the caretaker. Amy has been replanting some of dead trees, so there are newly planted along with 9-year-old trees. A three-panel sign was installed at the site. The signs were purchased by the WV chapter of TACF and installed by members of WVU's forestry department.



Amy Metheny in the middle of two rows at the old archery range planting.

Below is a picture of the 3-panel sign at the archery range site.



Three-panel sign at the archery range site



A tree that has died back and is now resprouting

This is a demonstration planting, so other chestnut species (Chinese chestnut [*Castanea mollissima*], European chestnut [*C. sativa*], American chestnut [*C. dentata*], and Allegheny chinquapin [*C. pumila*] have been planted to show visitors the difference among the various species. The Allegheny chinquapins were just planted in 2024. Many thanks to Amy Metheny for maintaining this planting, as she has weeded, fertilized, applied hardwood bark mulch for moisture and overseen the mowing of the plot..



One of the Chinese chestnuts at the site.



Two of the larger trees at the archery range site.

### **TACF's Ladder Safety Policy**

One new initiative from TACF is a policy on ladder safety. Pollination and nut collection often require the use of ladders and the following is a portion of the ladder safety policy. The safety of American Chestnut Foundation (TACF) staff and volunteers is the top priority while at work. Ladders are occasionally used in performance of duties, particularly in orchard operations, and represent a significant risk to employee safety. To minimize risk from ladder falls, all staff and volunteers should be trained in safe ladder operation, only use approved and regularly inspected ladders, and operate ladders according to proper standards. All ladders should be inspected for defects by field supervisors and/or ladder owners at least annually.

#### LADDER TRAINING

Prior to operating a ladder all staff should have on file that they have successfully completed safety training and attest that they will only operate ladders according these guidelines. Volunteers are also required to complete ladder safety training to use ladders for TACF activities.

#### LADDER INSPECTION

Always inspect the ladder prior to using it. If the ladder is damaged, it must be removed from service and tagged appropriately until repaired or discarded. Inspections should look for missing components or damaged components (bent, detached, corroded, or worn). Damaged ladders should never be used. Ladders must be free of any slippery material (wet grass or other vegetation, mud, silicone, grease, etc.) on the rungs, steps or feet. Read and follow all labels/markings on the ladder, as well as any manufacturer guidelines. Do not exceed the maximum load rating of a ladder. Be aware of the ladder's load rating and of the weight it is supporting, including the weight of any tools or equipment.

#### LADDER OPERATION

A ladder should only be operated with a least two people present so one person can operate the ladder and the second can secure the base of the ladder and also look for hazards. A third person may be helpful to support the worker on the ladder by passing them equipment and supplies as needed, allowing for a consistent spotter to remain at the ladder base. Always maintain a 3-point (two hands and a foot, or two feet and a hand) contact on the ladder when climbing. Keep your body near the middle of the step and always face the ladder.

Only use ladders and appropriate accessories (ladder levelers, jacks or hooks) for their designed purposes.

Do not use a self-supporting ladder (e.g. step ladder) as a single ladder or in a partially closed position. Do not use the top step/rung of a ladder as a step/rung unless it was designed for that purpose.

Do not place a ladder on boxes, barrels or other unstable bases to obtain additional height.

Do not move or shift a ladder while a person or equipment is on the ladder.

Do not carry objects or loads that could cause loss of balance and falling.

An extension or straight ladder used to access an elevated surface must extend at least 3 feet above the point of support. Do not stand on the three top rungs of a straight, single or extension ladder. The proper angle for setting up an extension or straight ladder is to place its base a quarter of the working length of the ladder from the wall or other vertical surface.

Be sure that all locks on an extension ladder are properly engaged.

#### SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR ORCHARD OPERATIONS

The following safety precautions should be followed when using ladders for orchard operations:

• Train workers to recognize hazards and set up a process for workers to report unsafe conditions to field supervisors immediately.

• Limit or reschedule work requiring ladders during windy, wet, or other unsafe conditions.

#### To Prevent Falls, Train Workers to:

• Pollinate or harvest burs from the top of the tree to the bottom.

• Face the ladder at all times, including when climbing and working with flowers or burs.

• When using a tripod orchard ladder, use one hand to grip the ladder's side rail and use he other hand for harvesting, keeping both feet on the ladder's steps.

• Always center themselves, any equipment and/or their harvest bags between the side rails.

- Never overreach when working on a ladder! Your center of gravity should remain over the ladder at all times.
- Never stand on tree branches.
- When using a tripod orchard ladder, do not climb higher than the third step from the top of the ladder.

Field supervisors must inspect ladders for defects prior to each use, and after a ladder tips over.

Use the ladder safety checklist appended to this safety policy.

### Remember

• Allow only one worker at a time on a ladder.

• Ladders with defects or damage should be taken out of service.

• Do not overreach while on a ladder. Your center of gravity should remain over the ladder at all times.

• The tripod orchard ladder is for orchard use only.

# **Plant Materials Center in Alderson**

In 2023, **Donny Dodd, Matt Murphy**, and **Carl Gower** of NRCS prepped three areas and planted 60 backcross chestnuts at the Plant Materials Center (PMC) for a site suitability study. There were three varieties of chestnuts provided by **Sara Fitzsimmons**, (TACF's Chief Conservaton Officer). The three areas where the trees were planted represent three soil types with differing soil moisture. Twenty seedlings were planted at each location. The chestnut varieties were AC-22 MV B3F3s from the Duncan farm at Meadowview, and AC 22-05 and AC 22-03, Clapper lines from the Penn State nursery. Plastic tree shelters were used to protect the seedlings from deer.

In mid-June of this year, **Cassie Stark**, TACF's Mid-Atlantic Regional Science Coordinator and **Lauren Kerwien**, TACF's lab manager at Meadowview, led a tour of NRCS personnel at the three PMC chestnut sites.

Carl Gower, NRCS Forester, Warren Hayes, and Randall Lester who work at the PMC were present, along with a wide representation of folks from NRCS. There were 10-15 individuals who represented various disciplines, such as soil science, agronomy, and soil conservation. In addition, a number of NRCS supervisors were in attendance.

Carl gave a quick summary of TACF's partnership with PMC and he provided a brief outline of the plots at PMC. Cassie and Lauren talked about TACF and our science plan and answered lots of questions surrounding Large Surviving Americans, blight resistance, how far are we from reintroduction, and Darling-58. The three sites were visited and, of the 60 total trees, 55 are living.

The meeting ended on a positive note with opportunities for expanding the plots or doing understory plantings. Many thanks to Cassie and Lauren for making the trip to Alderson.



The group tour at Alderson in June 2024 was led by Cassie Stark and Lauren Kerwien from TACF.



A chestnut seedling emerging from a tree shelter at the PMC.

# The Woods in Berkeley County

Outside Hedgesville in Berkeley County is a housing development, **The Woods**. In the early 1900s, much of the land that was to become The Woods consisted of apple orchards owned by the Back Creek Orchard Company In 1972, Roy Johnston began developing the land, and the first homes were sold in 1976. Today, more than 1200 families own homes in The Woods. Most are vacation homeowners from the Washington, DC and, Baltimore suburbs. The Woods also has a golf course, spa and other recreational activities. Between 2009-2015, one-hundred backcross trees were planted along on the gold course fairways. The impetus for planting chestnut hybrids at this location was due to the late **Dick Will**, former TACF board of director's president, who owned a home at The Woods.



Sign at The Woods Golf Course where the hybrid chestnuts are planted.

On 2 July 2024, **Bernie Coyle**, WV chapter president, visited the owner, **Sally Johnston Navarini** and her grounds manager, **Gary Stevens**. Together they looked at the trees that were planted between two fairways. There were several trees that reached 15' in height, 3" in diameter. These trees have been flowering and producing nuts. Some of the trees had chestnut blight cankers that were not active. This indicates that at least some of the trees may have sufficient resistance to the chestnut blight fungus.



Sally Johnston Navarini and Gary Stevens of The Woods.



Burs are forming on some of the larger trees.

There are other trees that have active blight with dying/dead branches.



An overview of the hybrid chestnut trees planted on the gold fairway. The small tree on the left has branches that are flagging, a sign of active chestnut blight cankers.



Sally Johnston Navarini by a 5' hybrid chestnut.

Bernie indicated that all of the trees still have wire cages and some show remnants of tree shelters. There are a few cages where the original chestnut died, and they now house black cherry and big-tooth aspen.

Sally Johnston Navarini would welcome additional trees to replace those that have died. Since the site is on a golf course, the grass is well maintained and there are no weeds. Some of the cages show signs of being clipped by the gang reel mowers. Bernie indicated that if we can identify the lineage of some of the larger trees, **Dr. Jared Westbrook,** TACF's Director of Research, might integrate them as part of TACF's Best X Best program.



During Bernie's visit, he took a photo of a plaque honoring the efforts of The Woods founder, **Ray Johnston** (1934-2008), father of Sally Johnston Navarini. The inscription on the plaque reads, "Ray Johnston, Founder of The Woods, Visionary, Veteran, Educator, Legislator, Builder, Community Leader, Marathoner, Sailor, Pilot, Philanthropist, Historian and Lifelong Student. Where others saw an overgrowth of greenbriers, Ray saw a community and golf course. The Woods comprises nearly 2,000 acres assembled over a 25-year-period by Ray. He designed the golf course and laid out every road and every lot. Those of us who love it here are grateful for Ray's knowledge, his vision and his commitment to The Woods".

## **Rowlesburg Park Chestnuts**

In 2015, two hybrid chestnut trees were planted at the Rowlesburg Park in Preston County, by then Mid-Atlantic Regional Science Coordinator, **Matt Brinckman**, pictured below.



In July 2024, one of the trees has several chestnut blight cankers. While one of the branches is dying, the cankers do not appear to be lethal. The cankers have a swollen appearance with limited stroma, the orange pustules in which fungal spores are produced. Below is a photo of the two trees.

