



The West Virginia Chapter of The American Chestnut Foundation

NEWSLETTER



In the heart of American chestnut's natural range

June 2025

WV-TACF Officers

President--Bernie Coyle
Vice President--Jerry Legg
Treasurer--Sam Muncy
Secretary--Jeff Kochenderfer

Board of Directors

Dr. Lewis Cook
Linda Coyle
Dr. Joe Golden
Jimmy Jenkins
Carla Kesling
Dr. Don Kines
Dr. William MacDonald
Dr. Brian Perkins
Rick Sypolt
Dr. Melissa Thomas-VanGundy

Find us on Facebook: @WVTACF
National Office: 50 N. Merrimon
Street, Asheville, NC 28804
Phone: 828-281-0047

Email: WVChapter@tacf.org
Website: tacf.org/wv
Newsletter Editor: Mark Double

WV Chapter's 50th Newsletter Edition

Wow, our 50th newsletter edition. Back in 2017 when I became the WV chapter president, I received a packet of information from TACF's national office in Asheville, NC. As a new president, I was unsure of what was expected as a chapter president, so the packet of information from TACF was very helpful. One of the suggestions was that each chapter should have a newsletter. There were no rules as to how long a newsletter should be nor how many editions per year. There are some state chapters that do not yet have a newsletter, while other chapters produce magazine-quality editions. In 2017, I had zero experience writing a newsletter. I was creating something from scratch.

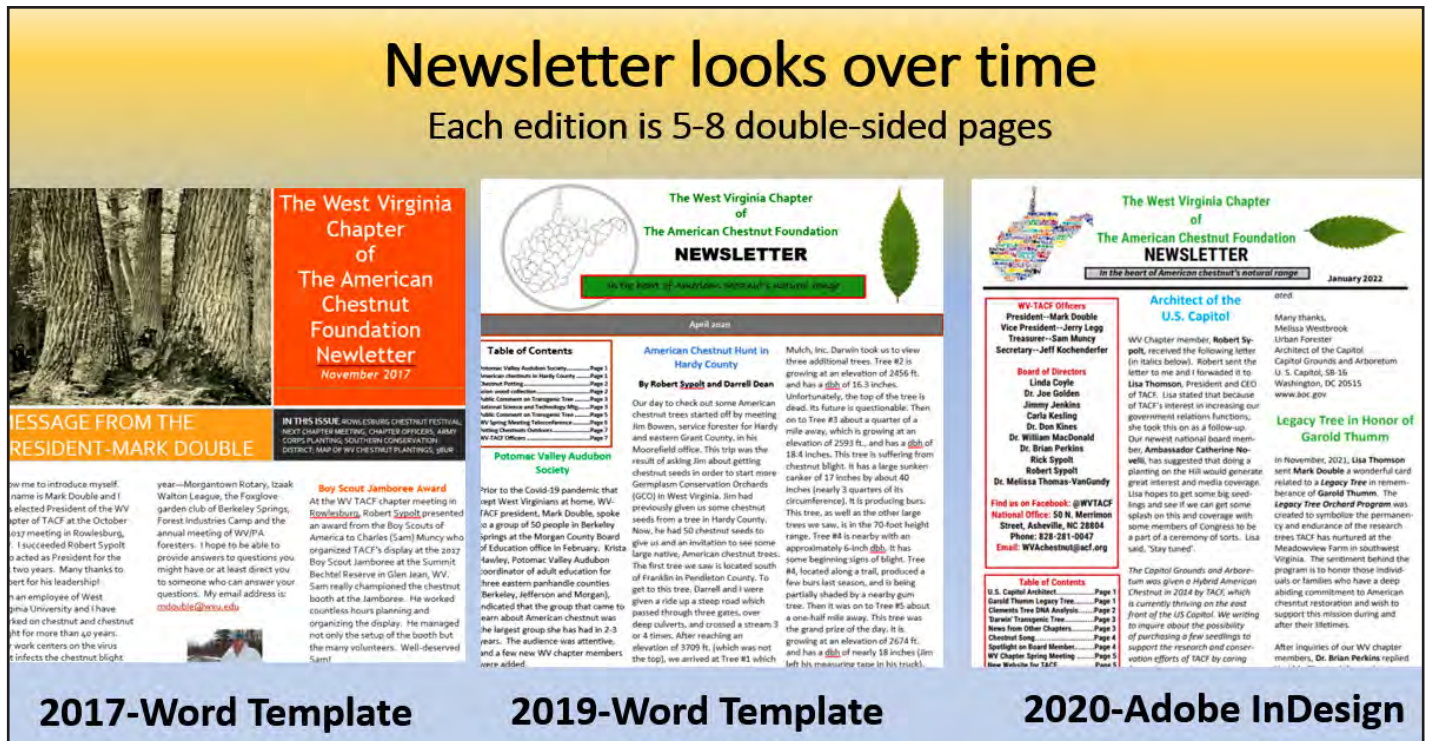


Table of Contents

50th Newsletter Edition.....	Page 1
WV State Capitol Chestnut.....	Page 3
Lost River Planting.....	Page 3
Chestnut Seedling Distribution.....	Page 3
Mountain Maryland Native Plants.....	Page 4
Berkeley Springs Planting.....	Page 5
Jennings Randolph Lake Planting.....	Page 5
Eagleview Lavendar Farm.....	Page 5
The Woods.....	Page 6
Holly River State Park Planting.....	Page 6
WV Division of Forestry Plantings.....	Page 6
Waddell Orchard Video.....	Page 7
Work Day at Parsons.....	Page 7
Wonderful WV Magazine Article.....	Page 8

I started very simply with a Word document, something with which I was familiar. I started with a blank page, and that page needed a header. I have used the iconic picture of the large American chestnut trees in western North Carolina in many talks, so I thought that would be a good image for a header. I did not have much content, but I put together the first newsletter for the WV chapter in November, 2017. The first edition's cover page can

be seen in the panel on the left in the photo below. It was a short newsletter with only a few articles: Rowlesburg Chestnut Festival; the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers planting; the Southern Conservation District; a map of WV plantings, and, the 3BUR approach toward restoration (breeding, biological control and biotechnology).



Over the years, the header changed. While still using a Word template, we changed the look of the newsletter in 2019. A friend suggested that Word can be cumbersome and suggested using Adobe In Design to produce the newsletter. The switch to InDesign was made in January 2020. The header was a map of the state that contained various WV cities (right panel, above). The header was changed again to a design made by **Professor Nora MacDonald**, wife of a WV board of directors, **Dr. William MacDonald**. That design was used up until the national TACF group developed a new logo, seen below on the left. Each state chapter was given their own logo, as seen on the right.

The new logo marked a significant milestone in TACF's more than 40-year journey dedicated to restoring the



American chestnut. This exciting development represents the culmination of a multi-year effort to enhance the Foundation's presence and communications. The new brand includes TACF's inaugural tagline, "Rooted in Restoration," an anthem that captures the essence of the American chestnut and the unwavering dedication of those involved in its restoration. "We are excited to unveil this new brand and share it with our supporters," added **Jules Smith**, TACF's Director of Communications. "This is more than a new brand; it's a powerful tool to advance our mission and tell the story of the American chestnut in a cohesive and compelling way."

WV State Capitol Chestnut

A hybrid chestnut was planted on the grounds of the WV State Capitol in 2010 to commemorate the fallen coal miners who died in the Upper Big Branch mine disaster on 5 April 2010 (Montcoal area of Raleigh County). The disaster killed 29 and injured 2 miners, the worst in the Mountain State since the Farmington mine disaster in 1968 where 78 miners lost their lives.

The following pictures of the Capitol tree were taken in early May, 2025. The tree is fighting as can be seen by the cankers in the lower picture.



State Capitol tree on the grounds near the museum.



The Capitol tree is heavily cankered, but surviving.

The Capitol tree is now 15 years old, and it is cankered but surviving. While the main stem has several coalescing cankers, there is no evidence of the chestnut blight fungus fruiting, a sign that the tree has some resistance. There are a few dead branches in the crown, but as seen in the photo, the tree looks to be in good shape. If you are in Charleston and have an interest in seeing the tree, it is on the grounds to the left of the Capitol, if you are facing the building with the Kanawha River at your back.

Lost River Planting

Lost River is an unincorporated community on the Lost River along WV Route 259 in eastern Hardy County, West Virginia. WV chapter member, **Dan Radke**, has a chestnut planting there. Dan has 30 American chestnuts planted on his property that is bordered on three sides by the National Forest. Virtually all of his property is forest with a few cleared areas for sunlight.



One of Dan Radke's American chestnut seedlings.

Chestnut Seedling Distribution

Sunday, April 27th, **Bernie and Linda Coyle** distributed 2025 chestnut seedlings to members in the Charles Town area.

Aaron Amore with the Charles Town Tree Board, **Kimberly and Carl Benson** with the Friends Wilderness Center and **Susan Thompson**, at Shepherd University,

picked up chestnut seedlings for their respective plantings. Susan picked up seedlings for her own planting at Shepherd University as well as seedlings for the Rolling Ridge Conservancy and The Woods.

The seedlings were potted and started in the WVU greenhouse in Morgantown and then transferred to the Potomac State College greenhouse. For having traveled nearly 200 miles in their young lives, the seedlings were healthy and growing well.

The Charles Town Tree Board was the winner of the 2025 grant from the West Virginia Chapter of TACF. With the seedlings and the grant, the Tree Board will reintroduce American chestnut trees in the city of Charles Town. It was a beautiful day to give and receive American chestnut seedlings.



Pictured, left to right, Linda Coyle, Carl Benson, Susan Thompson and Kimberly Benson getting their chestnut seedlings in Charles Town from Linda Coyle.



Linda Coyle and Aaron Amore with the Charles Town tree board.

Mountain Maryland Native Plant Fair

On Saturday, May 10, **Bernie and Linda Coyle** of the WV chapter, and **Dean Yap** of the Maryland chapter worked a booth at the Mountain Maryland Native Plant Fair at the Savage River State Forest, outside Grantsville, MD. There were a number of visitors from the D.C. area who had come to Savage River, either to camp or to visit property they owned.

One visitor recalled property he owned back in the 1960s where the hillside was covered in big, dead chestnut snags. Most of them had fallen down and were rotting, but some were hung up in other trees, and that kept them off the ground, and the wood remained sound. Those trees were hauled to a sawmill nearby in Pennsylvania. When the sawyer saw the chestnut logs, he stopped what he was doing so he could admire the chestnut. The sawyer was very excited to see chestnut. The logs made enough beautiful timber to panel a room in his house and side a barn.



Dean Yap (blue hat), Bernie and Linda Coyle (seated) talk chestnut at the Mountain Maryland Native Plant fair.



There was a constant crowd of visitors at the chestnut booth.

One of our WV chapter members is **Jacob Raeder**, although Jacob lives in Philadelphia, PA. Jacob was excited to learn that his chestnuts could be brought to the native plant fair where his parents could stop and pick them up.



Joe and Lisa Raeder picked up chestnut seedlings for their son, Jacob, who lives in Philadelphia.

Berkeley Springs Planting

On May 17, **Susan Thompson** planted 18 native American chestnut seedlings in Berkeley Springs as part of her work at Shepherd University. The planting is between Greenwood and Unger, not far from the boarder with Virginia. Again, Susan used tree shelters from the WV chapter. The owners have agreed to keep an eye out and apply mud packs if they notice chestnut blight

cankers. These trees are part of Susan's ectomycorrhizae experiment. She is using various species of *Cantharelles* as an amendment to her soils as this fungus forms symbiotic associations with plants.

Jennings Randolph Lake Planting

The Army Corps of Engineers hosted a chestnut planting event open to the public on June 7. Forty American chestnut seedlings that were raised at the WVU greenhouse in Morgantown were transported by **Bernie and Linda Coyle** to Jennings Randolph Lake. A dozen volunteers from the Army Corps of Engineers and Leave No Trace helped in addition to WV-TACF chapter members.



Volunteers planted at Jennings Randolph Lake.



Area view of the planting above the dam.

Eagleview Lavender Farm

Chuck and Kathy Kimble of the Eagleview Lavender Farm in Maysville were given three American chestnut seedlings by **Linda Coyle** for their farm.

The Kimbles have 87 total acres with 72 acres in the Farmland Protection program, a federal program administered by the state and county to protect farmland from commercial development. The Kimbles donated all their rights. Agricultural activities are permitted on the property but no commercial development of any

kind is allowed for perpetuity. The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is run through the USDA, and it protects streams from degradation by agricultural runoff and livestock use of natural streams. Contractually, property owners agree to protect the streams with fencing. They also have planted 10,000 trees including oak, walnut, Chinese chestnut, plum, apple and various bushes to feed wildlife.



Kathy and Chuck Kimble display the three American chestnut trees from Linda Coyle.

The Woods

The Woods is a 2,000 acres private development property with about 1,300 homes located outside Hedgesville. Between 2009-2015, one-hundred chestnut trees were planted along the golf course due to the efforts of former TACF Board of Director's President, **Dick Will**, who lived at The Woods. WV

chapter member, **Susan Thompson**, led three students who planted 12 advanced backcross trees that



replaced trees that had died. Susan stated, "Our success was in no small part attributable to **Tyler Clark** (The Woods groundskeeper), who took the lead in planning, preparation, and oversaw the planting crew. His professionalism and positive attitude made it a really enjoyable experience". Susan also thanked her crew: **Lily, Hunter,**

and Lexi, as hard-working young people. By the time they were halfway through, Susan could have let them take over. Susan hopes you get a chance to go out soon and see the beautiful, sweeping, seedling array they helped plant along the golf course.



Susan Thompson (right) with her work crew, Lily, Hunter and Lexi, at The Woods.

Holly River State Park Planting

WV chapter members, **Mark Marchok** (pictured here) and **Tom Prall**, planted four American chestnut trees at Holly River State Park with the Park Superintendent's permission. Two trees were planted on either side of activity building. They want to plant about 20 this fall around old, very large American chestnut stumps at the park. Holly River State Park, located in Hacker Valley, is an ideal location for American chestnut with more than 8,000 acres of heavily forested land, some more than 2,800 feet in elevation.



WV Division of Forestry Plantings

Travis Miller, Assistant Director of the WV Division of Forestry (DOF) and his crew, planted 160 chestnuts in two state forests, Calvin Price SF in eastern Pocahontas and Greenbrier Counties and Cabwaylingo SF outside Dunlow in Wayne County. Travis sent a map that detailed the 148 chestnut trees that were planted in Calvin Price SF. They included 142 American chestnuts from

the Clements nursery in Mason County and six hybrid trees from TACF's Meadowview farm in Virginia. The trees were planted in an orchard setting in an existing field. The trees were 15'-20' apart in rows that were 20' apart. As can be seen in the photos below, tree shelters and caging were used for all the trees in the Calvin Price SF. Twelve trees were planted at Cabwaylingo SF using just tree shelters. Many thanks to Travis and his fellow WV DOF workers for their efforts.



Part of the 148 trees planted at the Calvin Price State Forest by the WV DOF.



Twelve trees were planted in an opening at Cabwaylingo State Forest.

Waddell Orchard Video

The Waddell chestnut orchard that is directly behind Preston County High School is a living laboratory for Preston High biology students. Since the orchard was planted in 2013 by **Robert Sypolt**, Robert has led annual tours of the orchard to biology classes. The trees are a variety of American with some backcross hybrids and other chestnut species. Robert requested a video that can be shown to biology students in the years to come when he may no longer be able to con-

duct tours. Morgantown videographer, **Angela Smith**, filmed **Amy Metheny** from West Virginia University, **Mark Double**, representing WV-TACF and **Robert Sypolt** who planted and maintained the orchard since its inception. Amy talked about the history of American chestnut, while Mark talked about the WV chapter and TACF's efforts to restore American chestnut back into our eastern North American forests. Robert detailed the trees in the orchard, and we were able to highlight active cankers and catkins on many of the trees.



Amy Metheny from WVU and videographer, Angela Smith, film at the Preston High School Waddell chestnut orchard.

Work Day at Parsons Nursery

On June 7, nine people gathered at the nursery bottom in Parsons to assess the 130-tree American chestnut orchard, weed around all the trees and lay out 100-spots for a 2026 Best X Best orchard. The work crew was led by **Jeff Kochenderfer**, who is employed at the U.S. Forest Service office at the nursery bottom. Jeff was assisted by his father, **Jim**, along with **Blaise and Pat Hollot**, **Brian and Jim Smith**, **James Hoadley**, **Herman Burky** and **Mark Double**.



Pat and Blaise Hollot assessed all the chestnut trees in the 130-tree American chestnut orchard in Parsons.



Herman Burky weeded around the chestnut trees.



Jim Hoadley removed other vegetation around the trees.



Jeff Kochenderfer sprayed herbicide to prepare for a 100-tree Best X Best planting in 2026 that is adjacent to the current germplasm conservation orchard in Parsons.



Many of the chestnut trees at the Parsons orchard were producing catkins.



Brian Smith weeded around the chestnuts on the orchard.



Jeff Kochenderfer, Jim Hoadley, Pat and Blaise Holliot, Brian and Jim Smith and Herman Burky volunteered at the Parsons orchard.

Wonderful WV Magazine Article

The June 2025 edition of the *Wonderful West Virginia Magazine* featured an article on American chestnut. The article was written by **Laney Eichelberger** with photos from WV chapter member, **Mark Double**.