FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Evergreen Community Charter School Students Helping to Restore the American Chestnut to Biltmore

Asheville, NC

Wednesday, November 13, 2013 from 9 AM - 12 PM, students from Evergreen Community Charter School will plant American chestnut seedlings on the grounds of Biltmore in Asheville, NC. American chestnuts were formerly common on the estate, but were almost wiped out by a chestnut blight in the twentieth century. The chestnut seedlings are part of a unique breeding program led by The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF) to restore the American chestnut to the eastern forests of North America.

A previous breeding orchard planted in 1997 at Biltmore failed due to the trees’ susceptibility to Phytophthora cinnamomi, a pathogen that thrives in parts the southern range of the American chestnut and is lethal to most American chestnuts. Trees planted on Wednesday represent a significant step in the TACF breeding program aimed at restoring American chestnuts by creating chestnuts that are resistant to chestnut blight and Phytophthora cinnamomi.

Once the mighty giants of the eastern forests, American chestnuts stood up to 100 feet tall, and numbered in the billions. They were a vital part of the forest ecology, a key food source for wildlife and an essential component of the human economy. In 1904 the fungal pathogen responsible for chestnut blight, accidentally imported from Asia, spread rapidly through the American chestnut population. By 1950 it had killed virtually all the mature...
trees from Maine to Georgia. Several attempts to breed blight resistant trees in the mid-1900s were unsuccessful.

Then in 1983, a dedicated group of scientists formed The American Chestnut Foundation and began a special breeding process, which in 2005 produced the first potentially blight-resistant trees called Restoration Chestnuts 1.0. Now assisted by nearly 6,000 members and volunteers in 16 state chapters, the organization is undertaking the planting of Restoration Chestnuts 1.0 in select locations throughout the eastern US as part of the Foundation’s early restoration efforts.

For press interested in covering the event, please contact Mila Kirkland at mila@acf.org or (828) 281-0047.

TACF is a 501(c) (3) conservation organization headquartered in Asheville, NC. For more information on TACF and their work to restore the American chestnut tree, contact Mila Kirkland at (828) 281-0047, email mila@acf.org or visit www.acf.org.