FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Garden Club of America Awards Prestigious Medal of Honor to The American Chestnut Foundation

Philadelphia, PA

On May 2nd, The Garden Club of America (GCA) will present their Medal of Honor, the highest award given to an outside organization, to The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF®) for outstanding service to horticulture. For thirty years, TACF has worked to restore the American chestnut to the eastern forests, after the species was decimated by blight in the 20th century. The award will be presented by Jane O. Goedecke, National Chairman of GCA’s Awards Committee, at the GCA’s Awards Dinner in Philadelphia, PA. The award will be accepted by TACF President and CEO, Bryan Burhans.

"TACF is deeply honored to receive this award," says Burhans. "Gardeners and garden clubs have been a very important part of TACF’s success story. Without the hearts and hands of dedicated, hardworking gardeners, we never could have achieved all that we have."

The Garden Club of America awarded the first Medal of Honor in 1920. Over the years, recipients have included Robert Moses, New York’s Park and Highway Commissioner (1938), Henry Francis duPont, for the creation of Winterthur Gardens (1956), and Nobel-Laureate Dr. Norman Borlaug, for his work to develop wheat strains that helped feed the developing world (1987). Interestingly, Dr Borlaug was also one of the founders of The American Chestnut Foundation in 1983.

"In awarding medals," says Jane Goedecke, "the Garden Club of America looks to honor those individuals and organizations who share our values and further our mission: to stimulate the knowledge of gardening and to restore, improve and protect the quality of the..."
environment. The American Chestnut Foundation meets all those criteria and we are proud to award it the Medal of Honor."

Once the mighty giant of our eastern forests, American chestnuts stood up to 100 feet tall, and numbered in the billions. In 1904 a blight, accidentally imported from Asia, spread rapidly through the American chestnut population. By 1950 the blight fungus had killed virtually all the mature trees from Maine to Georgia.

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 18 states, the organization is undertaking the test planting of Restoration Chestnuts 1.0 in select locations, including reclaimed mined land, throughout the eastern US.

Founded in 1913, the Garden Club of America is a volunteer nonprofit organization comprised of 200 member clubs and approximately 18,000 members throughout the country. GCA members passionately devote their energies and expertise to a wide array of projects in their communities and across the nation. For more information on Garden Club of America and the GCA award program contact Jane O. Goedecke at janegoedecke@comcast.net

Celebrating its thirtieth anniversary in 2013, TACF is a 501(c)(3) conservation organization headquartered in Asheville, NC. For photos or more information on TACF and their work to restore the American chestnut tree, contact Paul Franklin at (828)281-0047 email: pfranklin@acf.org. Or visit www.acf.org.