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TREE URCHIN

Maine Chapter, The American Chestnut
Foundation
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President's Message

By Al Faust

Greetings.

The second half of 2016 brought some good news, some sad news and some exciting prospects for 2017.

First, the sad news. Our Treasurer for many years of service is leaving. Joseph Conwill has been a valued member of our team of volunteers. His attention to the duties of treasurer has been a wonderful asset, as have his advice and field work.

The good news is that the American Chestnut Foundation has chosen South Portland to be the site of the national convention in October. This will be a great chance for all Mainers interested in the American chestnut restoration project to see what is happening at the national level, and to meet leaders from the national organization and other chapters.

The exciting news is that Brian Roth, Tom Klak, and Matt Chatfield along with their students at the University of Maine, the University of New England, and Unity College are going to be growing several thousand chestnuts in their greenhouses this winter to use in a small stem assay project in conjunction with the national organization. See the article on page 3 for more information.



Planting chestnut seeds

TACF National Meeting

For the first time ever, The American Chestnut Foundation's national annual meeting will be held in Maine. Watch our web site for more information.

We hope many Mainers will attend and participate in the convention. This is a wonderful opportunity for Maine members!

Our web site has been redesigned!
Learn more about The American Chestnut Foundation at:
<http://www.acf.org> and
<http://www.me-acf.org>.

Meet Your Directors

Tom Klak joins the Maine Board of Directors

At the 2016 annual meeting, Dr. Thomas Klak was selected to join the Board of Directors of the Maine Chapter. Tom is a professor in the Department of Environmental Studies of the University of New England.



Previously, he has taught at Ohio State, the University of Wisconsin-Madison (where he received his M.S. and Ph.D.), University of Edinburgh, and Miami University, where he was also a Graduate Studies Advisor and Director of the Latin American, Latino/a, and Caribbean Studies Program. Tom's topical specializations include sustainability, local ecological restoration and native landscaping, and the Eastern Caribbean, especially Dominica. He has done extensive fieldwork in Dominica, St. Lucia, Jamaica, Ecuador, and Brazil, and also participated in study programs in 14 other countries.

Tom is the author or co-author of an extensive number of professional publications, and has been a Manuscripts Reviewer for over forty scholarly journals. He has also been Research Proposal Reviewer for the National Geographic Society, National Science Foundation, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Tom says, "I've been involved with many ecological restoration projects over recent decades, but none compare to the significance of American chestnut restoration. When (not if) we bring back this keystone hardwood tree of the Eastern U.S. forests, we will have reversed one of the greatest ecological disasters ever to befall this continent. How's that for giving you motivation for getting out of bed in the morning in order to make a difference! And how wonderful to be a part of the TACF and be able to contribute to bringing back the beloved American chestnut! Thank you for this opportunity to serve on the Maine chapter board; it is an honor and a privilege!"

His enthusiasm and skills make Tom a valuable addition to our board.

Want to volunteer? Go to Mail Chimp at <http://eepurl.com/bfD-s1> to sign up, or fill out the volunteer form in the Tree Urchin.

Mail Chimp is a free, easy way for us to notify volunteers when help is needed for planting seed orchards, inoculating trees, staffing exhibits, or other projects that require many helping hands.



Unity College Students prepare to plant chestnut seeds at the college's McKay Greenhouse

Experimenting with a New Procedure

This spring, Brian Roth of the University of Maine, Tom Klak of the University of New England, and Matt Chatfield of Unity College are beginning an experiment in small stem assay blight resistance testing.

These three academic institutions are providing greenhouse space for growing hybrid American chestnut seedlings provided by both the Maine chapter and other chapters of the Foundation. While the plants are still seedlings, they will be inoculated with a mild form of chestnut blight to determine their blight resistance.

This small stem assay (SSA) was developed by Dr. William Powell of SUNY-ESF, and a field trial was conducted last summer at the TACF research farm in Meadowview, Virginia. The Maine project will be the first time the SSA is conducted in greenhouses.

This procedure has several advantages over the inoculations previously conducted by the Maine chapter. Ordinarily, seeds are

planted directly into the soil in seed orchards and inoculated during their third or fourth growing seasons. This requires extensive land for the orchards and intensive labor for weed control, fertilizing, and protection from animals. In Maine, that labor is performed by volunteers and paid summer interns. The plot preparation, internships, fertilizer, weed control, fencing, and other forms of animal control are major costs for the Maine chapter.

Greenhouse-grown seedlings require watering and fertilizing, but they are not vulnerable to damage by deer, porcupines, turkeys, or other pests. Additionally, our orchard-grown trees are sometimes affected by their location. Trees in low-lying areas are more vulnerable than trees in well-drained soil. There is also an edge effect in orchards. Trees on the edge of an orchard thrive better than those in the middle of an orchard, probably because they get more sun. By growing seedlings in greenhouses, we should avoid these issues and get a much higher survival rate of trees to be tested for blight resistance.

Finally, field inoculation of three-year-old trees is grueling work for volunteers. After inoculated trees are evaluated, the chapter must cut down and burn the unsuccessful trees and grind their stumps. This is another expensive and labor-intensive process and adds another year to the process.

Another new method of determining blight resistance tests leaf samples for the genes that carry blight resistance. This leaf assay may be used in the future by the Maine chapter.

TACF is grateful to Unity College, the University of New England, and the University of Maine for their facilities and their talented, enthusiastic faculty and students.

Membership Form
Maine Chapter of The American Chestnut Foundation

Your membership in TACF supports all the Foundation's breeding, research, education, and publicity projects. For TACF membership support levels of \$40 or more, \$15 is forwarded to the Maine Chapter. Please consider making an additional contribution to the Maine Chapter to support our mission to produce blight-resistant Restoration chestnut trees most adaptable to Maine's forests by selecting a Maine Chapter Sponsorship Level in the right-hand column below. Thank you.

Membership in TACF includes a subscription to The Journal of The American Chestnut Foundation, a TACF auto decal, and enrollment in the Maine Chapter. Maine Chapter members may receive 10 pure American chestnut seeds; TACF and ME-TACF are 501©3 non-profit organizations. Except for the member services (valued at \$15) of your membership dues, your gifts are tax deductible.

Please send this form and your check(s) to:

Ann Rea, Treasurer, 231 Buck Street, Bangor, ME 04401.

For additional information, you may contact TACF at Mainetacf@gmail.com or 207.945.6945.

(Please print)

Your Name _____

Mailing Address: _____

City/State/ZIP _____

Telephone _____

E-Mail _____

Notice!

Members who join at the Chestnut Leaf, Bronze Leaf, or Silver Leaf level may receive potentially blight-resistant American chestnut hybrid seeds. Orders placed after February 1 will be filled the following year.

**JOIN The American
Chestnut Foundation
TACF Membership Support
Levels**

*Enclosed is my membership
support of:*

_____ Silver Leaf level \$1,000
 _____ Bronze Leaf level, \$500
 _____ Chestnut leaf level, \$300
 _____ Regular, \$40
 _____ Other, \$ _____

Make membership check to:
TACF

Maine Chapter Sponsorship

*Enclosed is my contribution to the
Maine Chapter of TACF in the
amount of \$ _____*

(Any amount is welcome.)

Make Maine sponsorship check to:
Maine Chapter -- TACF

Coming Events

- March 3-11 Aldo Leopold Week. Celebrate by reading *A Sand County Almanac* or *Think Like a Mountain*.
- March 8-10 New England Society of American Foresters, Cross Arena, Bangor. TACF New England Chapters will have a booth in the exhibit area.
- March 10-12 Eastern Maine Sportsmen's Show, New Balance Arena, Orono. Watch for the Maine Chapter exhibit at this popular event.
- March 15 Maine Chapter Board quarterly meeting, Viles Arboretum, Augusta.
- May 21-27 Maine Arbor Week. Plant a tree!
- October 5-8 TACF national annual meeting, South Portland.

Maine Chapter, TACF
231 Buck Street
Bangor, ME 04401

Return service requested

