

Chestnut Mast

Spring 2001



THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE CAROLINAS CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN CHESTNUT FOUNDATION

MAST: nuts (acorns) accumulated on the forest floor and often serving as food for animals (as hogs). -Merriam-Webster Dictionary

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Hugh Irwin

As our minds and bodies start to thaw from the winter, and spring wildflowers begin to open, the Carolinas Chapter is gearing up for many exciting projects and creative opportunities this year. The past year was one of beginnings and establishing roots. We have successfully created Bylaws and filed Articles of Incorporation for the Chapter, thanks to the able assistance of **Kim Steffan**, TACF member and attorney. A big milestone was reached in October of last year when the national organization officially recognized the Carolinas Chapter. We also have a Board of Directors that is taking an active hand in steering our organization and establishing programs, priorities, and budgets for the future.

As detailed in our Summer 2000 newsletter, we had a spectacularly successful first year of pollination and nut gathering. Our mother tree program is a high priority for our chapter, so having success

our first year was a tremendous confidence boost.

We are also making great strides in outreach efforts. **Leah Florence** in the Asheville office of TACF has aided the Chapter in making numerous contacts and taking advantage of outreach opportunities. American chestnuts, TACF, and the Carolinas Chapter have been covered several times in the media over the last year.

As exciting as the last year has been, the coming year holds even more opportunities and great programs for the Chapter. Please consider this an open invitation to become more involved in some of these opportunities. Our horizon is limited only by the ideas and work our membership can bring to our goal of returning the American chestnut to its important place as a forest tree throughout its range.

The Carolinas Chapter is readying for another breeding season after our first successful year. **Ron Myers** planted 280 hybrid nuts from last year's pollination efforts at the North Carolina State Forestry nursery in Morganton, North Carolina. **Paul Sisco** is planting an additional 280 hybrid nuts at

Warren Wilson College. In addition to the hybrids, 73 open pollinated American chestnuts gathered in North Carolina are being planted at the TACF farm in Meadowview, Virginia, and 50 will be planted in Fletcher, North Carolina. Paul, on sabbatical from Meadowview, is leading our effort to look at long-term options for a breeding program in the Carolinas, including a possible germplasm center.

We have 2 interns from Duke University scheduled to spend the summer documenting locations of large surviving chestnuts in the Carolinas. We plan to have these locations on a Geographic Information System in order to track our mother tree resources and keep better progeny records. The interns will be of great help as we start this year's effort to find large remaining American chestnut trees that bloom. We will pollinate these trees and gather the resulting nuts to be incorporated into the

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The American Chestnut
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BECOME A CHARTER MEMBER

For a one-time donation of \$60 over the usual \$40 membership fee, you may become a CHARTER MEMBER of the Carolinas Chapter. The additional money will help defray chapter operating costs.

Welcome New Charter Members!

Clay Ballantine
Stephen Barilovits III
Douglas Deyton
Joanne and David Drake
Suzanne and Stephen Jones
Phil and Liz Pritchard
Charlotte Ross
John K. Wilson
Dorothy Yunker

Current Board and Officers:

Robert Eidus, Treasurer
Jackie Greenfield
Hugh Irwin, President
Janice Irwin
Don Myers
Ron Myers
Bill O'Connor, Vice-President
Phil Pritchard
David Thompson,
Kim Thompson
Susan Wilson, Secretary

**THE MISSION OF TACF IS
SIMPLE: TO RESTORE THE
AMERICAN CHESTNUT AS AN
INTEGRAL PART OF THE
EASTERN FOREST ECOSYSTEM
THROUGH COOPERATIVE
RESEARCH AND A SCIENTIFIC
BREEDING PROGRAM.**

(President, continued from p.1)

breeding program. There is a great need for volunteers for this effort, as well as the pollination effort at the main breeding facility at Meadowview, Virginia.

There is also the need for volunteers to represent the Chapter at speaking engagements, green events, and other gatherings. We get a lot of invitations to set up an information exhibit at these functions. It can be great fun telling people about the history of the American chestnut and its potential for recovery. We also have a need for an accountant. Now that we have a bank account, a budget, and expenditures, we need someone with this expertise.

Elsewhere in the newsletter you will see plans for our annual meeting being held May 5th. I hope you will be able to make this gathering. It will give us all an excellent chance to meet one another, share some stories from this past year, and create plans for the coming year. We also have some great speakers and break-out session leaders who will share what they know about American chestnuts and offer us good hands-on activities.

This is also a very important meeting because elections for expiring terms on our Board of Directors will take place at the annual meeting. Please help us celebrate our accomplishments and plan for another exciting year.

If you are from a state adjoining the Carolinas, we would like to invite you to this meeting of the Carolinas Chapter. We are eager to meet TACF members in adjoining states to establish a connection with our neighbors and to encourage a regional consciousness about the key role American chestnuts played in the entire Southern Appalachian region.



"Sightings"

Bill O'Connor spoke to the Albemarle Rotary Club on 7 September—they also gave him a speaker's honorarium, which he donated to the chapter coffers. **Bill** also spoke on 2 November at Sherwood Forest in Brevard, courtesy of invitation from Beth Rogers, program chair of their Native Plant committee. They also sent an honorarium (**way to go, Bill!**) **Bill** started off the new year by addressing the Rutherfordton Lions Club on 2 January.

Chestnut roaster **Sadhvi Gantenbein** and TACF A'ville Office Manager **Leah Florence** spoke to a small group of people on 1 December in the Earth Fare Community room. Leah shared a brief history of the chestnut. **Sadhvi** created a salad, rice stir fry, and a chestnut creme dessert for all to sample.

Our good friend **Dr. Gene Spears**, of Lees-McRae, addressed the Rotarians in Banner Elk on 4 February.

On 17 March, **Don Myers** and **Susan Wilson** represented us for our third appearance at the Organic Growers' School at Blue Ridge Community College in Flat Rock.

Vote for "America's National Tree"

The Arbor Day Foundation is sponsoring this contest. Send your vote (we already know for which tree) to www.arborday.org by 27 April.

Looking For a Good Read?

Try **Barbara Kingsolver's** new novel *Prodigal Summer*. The author intersperses references to chestnuts throughout this story of southern Appalachia. Word has it that her character, Garnett, is loosely based on none other than our own **Fred Hebard**, researcher at TACF's Meadowview Farms in Virginia.

Field Notes



This Year's Chestnut Plantings in North Carolina

I. North Carolina Forest Service (NCFS) Plantings:

In 2001, 200 seedlings from 4 different crosses were outplanted in a demonstration planting at the Gill State Forest in Crossnore, NC. Three of these were open-pollinated BC2 families (op CL-53, op CL-149, op CL-160) that come from the Clapper source of resistance. The other source was pure American seedlings from a cross between the North Carolina Champion chestnut tree (in Wilkes County) and a tree from Virginia. Many thanks to **K.O Summerville** and **Paul Merten** for their tree planting help.

A new crop for future plantings was sown at NCFS's nursery in Morganton. The sources planted there include one BC2 from a Graves source of resistance (GR252 X "Rick Wilson" American chestnut), one open-pollinated source of Clapper resistance (op CL-40), one American intercross source (WB200 X Pilot Mtn. Amer), two different sources of third backcross (WayahB x WV131 [Clapper source], & (WayahB x WV480 [Graves source]), and three sources of pure American chestnut seed from NC.

II. Warren Wilson College Plantings:

Warren Wilson College in Swannanoa, NC, which has both a working farm and an undergraduate forestry program, is exploring the possibilities for a long-term working relationship with TACF. Undergrad farm and forestry crews cleared 1/2 acre of hillside for plantings of hybrid chestnut seed. The same sources that were planted at the NCFS's Morganton nursery will also be planted at Warren Wilson. Thanks to **Larry Modlin, John Pilson** and **Chase Hubbard** of Warren Wilson for making this all possible.

III. Plantings at the Mountain Horticultural Crops Research Station of the NC Dept. of Agriculture:

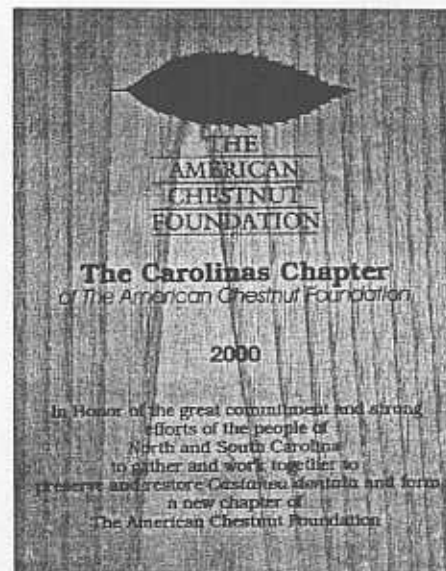
This Research Station, located close to the Asheville airport, is the home for several faculty and staff of North Carolina State University. Thanks to the efforts of **Dr. Tom Ranney, Brooke Haworth, Dennis Thompson,** and **Rick Livingston**, over 50 American chestnut seed from 5 different NC and Georgia sources are now growing in their greenhouses for outplanting this fall. This will be a test to show how well chestnut trees grow at the Research Station, and may be the beginning of a mutually beneficial relationship with the Carolinas Chapter.

Submitted by **Ron Myers**, Mother Tree Coordinator, and **Paul Sisco**, Staff Geneticist

NEWS FLASH!

We were pleased to learn that Carolinas Chapter member **Dr. Gene Spears**, Chair, Biology Department at Lees McRae College in Banner Elk, successfully obtained grant funding for a regional propagation center, earlier this year. The application was for propagation of native species, especially those useful to wildlife. They will be working with both open-pollinated and cross-pollinated chestnut in their greenhouse, that is, he will be planting some pure Americans and some BC4 seed there. **Forrest MacGregor**, VP of Projects and Planning, wrote a letter of support for this project on behalf of TACF.

At right, the plaque of chestnut wood given to the the Carolinas Chapter upon achieving full member status.





Mother Tree Update

By Ron Myers

Our local activities with the MT project are slowly beginning to bear fruit and build momentum for the future. There have been several significant developments and accomplishments this past year and I will highlight them briefly. Our chapter held a "Nut Gathering" workshop last September. The field trip included a visit to a demonstration planting in Crossnore. Collection and pollination efforts were also increased from the previous year.

SW Region - A large American chestnut mother tree near Wayah Bald, found by **Joe James**, was used for pollination to create a 3rd backcross product with NC genes. **Fred Hebard** and chapter MT volunteers made two separate crosses from this tree. (Hats off to **Joe, David Thompson, Hugh Irwin, Paul Sisco, Fred**, and others). Approximately 200 nuts from each cross were collected this past fall. Open pollinated nuts were also collected from this fine specimen. **Joe James** made a variety of small collections from other open pollinated American chestnuts.

Central Region - **Paul Sisco** worked at pollinating a tree found by **Rick Wilson** near Pensacola, NC. Unfortunately, the small crop of nuts produced (12 nuts) was lower than expected. Pollen from this tree was also crossed onto a tree at the Meadowview Farm to create a second backcross source.

NW Region - A total of 58 nuts were collected from 3 different sources of open pollinated American chestnuts. 20 nuts were collected from a tree near Grandfather Mountain. 8 nuts were collected near Curtis Creek in Buncombe county and 30 nuts were collected from a tree in Crossnore. **Ron Myers** was the collector in this region.

Other MT accomplishments include the preparation of an outline of "Carolina's Chapter MT Project" that gives an overview of our NC project, our organizational plan, and the primary functions of the MT project. Copies are available on request or at our upcoming annual meeting. We held a MT Project organizational meeting in December 2000 to highlight our YTD accomplishments and discuss future plans. A vote was approved to elect **Paul Sisco** as our new MT project coordinator. We have come far in a short period of time. Our chapter will be in good hands! I'm sure big things lie ahead for those willing to participate. Many thanks to all who have helped in our efforts to date.

Mother Trees' Summer School



Bonnie Millar and Lynne Boyd, graduate students in the Nicholas School of the Environment, Duke University, will be Stanback interns working for the Carolinas Chapter from 15 May to 15 August of this year. They will be documenting surviving stands of American chestnut in Western North Carolina, upper South Carolina, north Georgia, and perhaps southeastern Tennessee, as well.

Looking for a Speaker?

Is your group searching for an interesting and informative presenter? For an educational, entertaining day or evening event about the American chestnut and the role TACF is playing in the research being done to restore this king of trees to its original range, contact **Bill O'Connor** at (828) 890-5533. He will be speaking to the combined Dare and Currituck County garden clubs on September 20, 2001.



SPRING GATHERING IN CULLOWHEE
SATURDAY, 05 MAY, 9:30am - 3:30pm
on the campus of WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

--This is for prospective members, too, so please register and bring interested friend(s)--

This gathering promises to be bigger and better than our last one, and if you were at the Banner Elk meeting last fall, you know what a day we had. We have three exciting speakers, three break-out sessions to choose from, and a special treat is planned before we adjourn. Here's the proposed schedule:

9:30 - 9:45	Gather at Robinson Administration Building/Mountain Heritage Center
9:45 - 10:00	Welcome
10:00 - 12:00	Presentations: Dr. Hill Craddock, Dr. Dan Pittillo, Dr. Anne Rogers (see over for details)
12:00 -12:30	Freshen up. Walk to the West Wing at Dodson Cafeteria (bldg. #9 on map).
12:30 - 1:15	Lunch (see details below)
1:15 - 2:15	Business Meeting and Board Elections
2:30 - 3:30	Breakout sessions: a) Campus tour of chestnut/chinquapins with Dan Pittillo (limit 20, strenuous) b) Chestnut species ID session with Hill Craddock (at WCU Herbarium) c) Chestnut use by Native Americans with Anne Rogers (in West Wing)
3:30	Assemble at Dodson Cafeteria for coffee/tea and, hopefully, authentic chestnut bread provided by the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Nation. Adjourn
3:45 - 5:00	Board Meeting and Program/Committee Meeting

Fee: Members: \$25.00 (\$24.00 if vegetarian entree); \$30.00 for nonmembers.*
Meeting fee covers lunch, breakout sessions, afternoon refreshment, and speakers' honoraria.

Served lunch will be catered:

Deli Club Croissant-Smoked turkey, ham, havarti cheese, lettuce and tomato.

Vegetarian option: *Grilled Vegetable Focaccia*-sautéed mushroom, eggplant, zucchini, bell pepper and onion, with Provolone on herbed peasant bread brushed with olive tapenade.

Both accompanied by fresh fruit, potato salad, dessert, coffee or tea.

Please check the appropriate box below if you wish the vegetarian option.

Note: Registration and prepayment is required. Complete the form below, make your check payable to The Carolinas Chapter of TACF, and return both to the Asheville Office, 46 Haywood St., Suite 213, Asheville, NC 28801 **not later than April 20.**

Registration Form

Members:

Name _____ @ \$25.00 each x _____ = \$ _____
Name _____ @ \$24.00 each x _____
(if vegetarian)

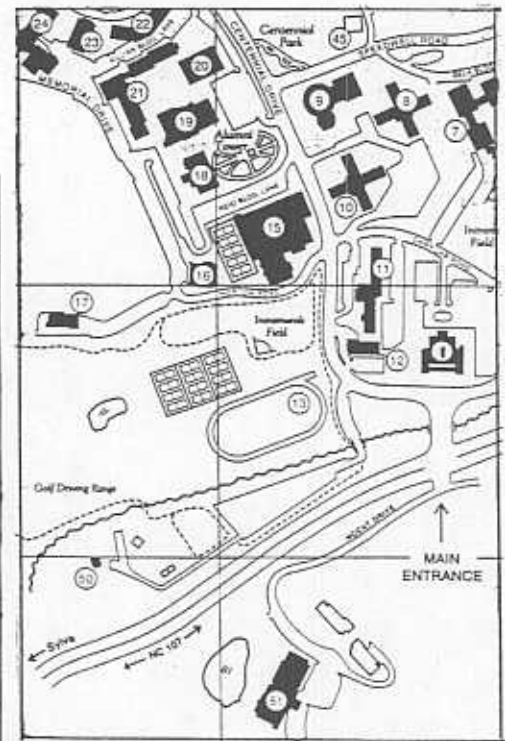
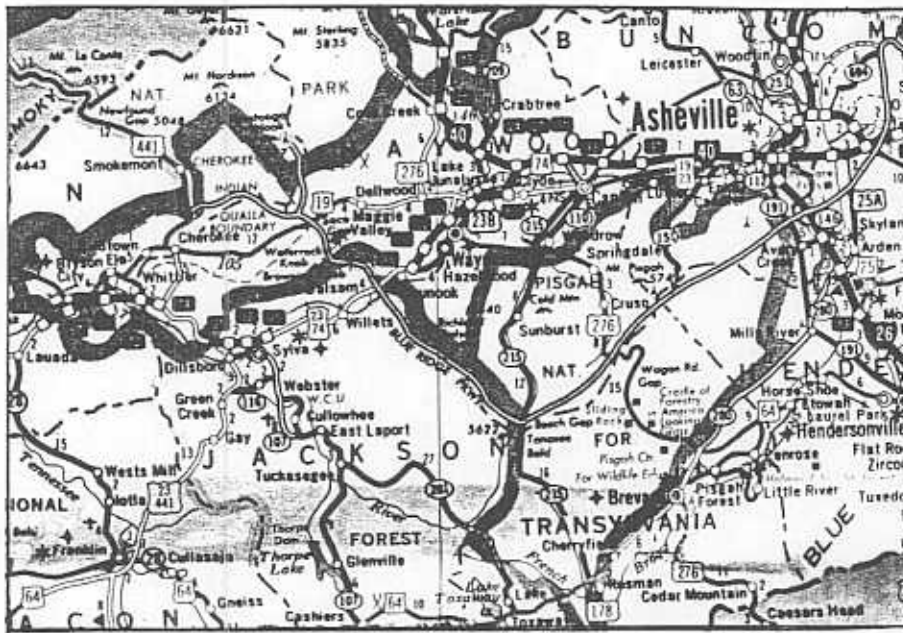
Nonmembers:

Name _____ @ \$30.00 each x _____ = \$ _____
(if vegetarian)

Address _____

*Attention nonmembers: If you join TACF now (annual fee, \$40.00), you may take advantage of the member fee for the gathering. Just fill in name and address at left and enclose your check for a total of \$65 (for nonveg. lunch) or \$64 (for veg. option.)

_____ **You must check here if you wish the vegetarian option.** If you are sending in a reservation for more than one person, indicate how many are vegetarian.



Cullowhee is on NC Highway 107, about 6 miles south of Sylva, NC. It is 50 miles from Asheville, NC. The Mountain Heritage Center is on the ground floor of the main campus administration bldg (H.F. Robinson Bldg., #1 on map), the first building you will see as you drive onto campus. It has large flags flying outside it. Park either on the right side or behind the building. Enter the Mountain Heritage Center from the front (the way you drove onto campus).

Directions from Asheville:

Take I-40 West to Exit 27 (US 19/23/74 South). Stay on 23/74 south of Waynesville (the Great Smoky Mtns. Expressway). Go west on US 23/74 to Exit 85 (Sylva, NC). Follow signs to Cullowhee and Western Carolina University (NC Highway 107 South).

Directions from South Carolina or Georgia:

It may be easiest to drive to Clayton, GA. From there follow US 23 North all the way to Sylva. Take Exit 83 and follow signs to Cullowhee (NC Highway 107 South). From Columbia or Spartanburg take Interstate 26 to Asheville and follow the directions from Asheville as outlined above.

Directions from Tennessee: Take US 64 East to Franklin, NC, then US 23 North to Sylva. At Sylva take Exit 83 and follow signs to Cullowhee (NC Highway 107 South).

About Our Speakers

Hill Craddock grew up in Woods Hole, MA, where his father was a marine biologist. His interest in chestnut began when he was only 15 years old, and he did a Ph.D. on chestnut in Italy. He is currently Robert Davenport Assistant Professor of Biology at the University of Tennessee - Chattanooga, where he heads up the Chattanooga Chestnut Tree Project. He is also the Vice President for Science of the American Chestnut Foundation. His web site is: <http://www.utc.edu/~jcraddoc/index.html>

Dan Pittillo grew up on a farm in Henderson County, NC, and has been a member of the biology department at Western Carolina University for 35 years. He is a botanist with a particular interest in and knowledge of native plants of the Southern Appalachians, including chestnuts and chinquapins. His web site is: <http://www.wcu.edu/as/biology/Pittillo/Pittillo.html>

Anne Rogers is Professor and Head of the Department of Anthropology and Sociology at Western Carolina University. Her interest in chestnuts and chinquapins goes back to stories her grandmother told her while she was growing up in Georgia. She has conducted archaeological excavations of Paleo-Indian sites, where she has learned a great deal about the use of nuts by Native Americans.

✓ Nominations to the Carolinas Chapter Board of Directors ✓

At the annual meeting on 5 May we will elect 6 members to our Board of Directors. During the past year the Carolinas Chapter's efforts qualified it as a full chapter of The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF). This work was carried out by a small group of dedicated members with diverse points of view and from many walks of life, all united by a common passion for restoring an American Chestnut tree resistant to the fungus that so nearly wiped them out.

These members formed a steering committee to guide the organizational and administrative efforts to expand the work of TACF to our area and to assist and guide the work in the Carolinas. When the chapter was approved as a 501(c) 3 corporation, these steering committee members agreed to serve as the initial board of directors. Five of those board members are standing for election this year. Because of their work to get us this far, because of all the work left to do to organize and direct the chapter to achieve tangible results here in our area, and most of all because they are willing to continue their management of and dedication to the work to be done, the Board of Directors of the Carolinas Chapter heartily endorses them and strongly recommends that you give them your support by electing them to a full two-year term on the board. These candidates are:

Jackie Greenfield, Janice Irwin, Don Myers, Phil Pritchard, Susan Wilson

For the sixth open seat, two nominations were received before we went to press:

Mr. Bill Trimarco, a retired dentist, TACF member, supporter of chapter activities, and eight-year resident of the area. The board knows Bill and appreciates his willingness to serve.

Mr. Forrest MacGregor, a technology consultant, was an initial member of the steering committee; he serves as VP of Projects and Planning (a new position) for TACF.

NOTE: Any member in good standing may be nominated and make a brief statement of candidacy at the business meeting prior to the election. For more information, contact Bill O'Connor at (828) 890-5533 or BillOC@brinet.com

We Couldn't Have Done it Without You!

A BIG thanks to **Kim Steffan** for her assistance and worthy work, gratis, in drafting and filing our Articles of Incorporation in preparation for our filing for 501(c)3 status. Kim is a TACF member and attorney, who practices in Hillsborough, NC.

Wanted! Is There a Tax Accountant In the House?????

The Carolinas Chapter needs the volunteer services of a nonprofit tax accountant. Call **Leah Florence** at TACF's Asheville Office, 281-0047, to put your talents to good use in this labor of love for the American chestnut.



Have You Seen It?

The **National Geographic** has a wonderful article in its March, 2001 issue. America's pioneer naturalist is featured in *A Naturalist's Vision of Frontier America, Legacy of William Bartram*, by **Glenn Oeland** with splendid photographs by **Annie Griffiths Belt**. The map, Bartram's artistic renderings of flora and fauna, and the descriptions of his journeys provide a timeline and historical perspective. The author mentions a recent trip to the "windblown summit of Wayah Bald," with botanist **Dan Pittillo**, one of the speakers featured at the upcoming Carolinas Chapter Annual Meeting (see bio elsewhere in this issue).

Carolinas Chapter Fall Gathering 2000 in Banner Elk Well Attended

The September meeting was held on the campus of Lees-McRae College where **Dr. Paul Sisco** and **Ron Myers**, forester, discussed the fine points of nut gathering. This was followed up after lunch with a conducted tour of the chestnut plantings at Gill State Forest in Crossnore for some actual "hands-on" experience. Our many thanks to Dr. Gene Spears (Chair, Biology Department, Lees-McRae College) not only for arranging for the college administration and the department pick up all expenses associated with the space and lunch, but for his hard work on that day.



Ron Myers leading discussion about seedlings recently planted.



Don Myers, one of your newsletter editors, showing off a chestnut seedling.

Ashley Carter and Paul Sisco look on as K.O. Summerville, retired forester, explains how to open burs to one of our younger members, Stephen Barilovits IV. Note the thick, protective gloves.



Alma Spicer listens to Ron Myers talk about the care of seedlings.



Paul Sisco leads group discussion about the care needed when establishing seedlings.

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