

American Chestnut Cooperators' Foundation Newsletter

2667 Forest Service Road 708

Newport, Virginia 24128

September 1998

Dear Friends & Cooperating Growers:

Growers' report: We sent 5,772 seednuts, from the 1997 Virginia harvest, and the nursery distributed 3,549 seedlings to our growers. The total for all distributions since 1985 is 68,272. Better records of numbers and ages of survivors from these plantings are needed to attract the grant funds necessary to protect them. In 1997 we received 45 growers' reports, accounting for 1,296 surviving American chestnuts. As of 10/20/98, 44 growers report 1,929 surviving ACCF chestnuts. Among these are a few older trees which exhibit a resistant reaction to blight and may be inoculated next spring.

The nursery can handle all seedling orders received in time for November shipping; later requests cannot be guaranteed. The cost is still \$25 per bundle of 25, and a check made out to ACCF must accompany all orders. We strongly advise spring planters to grow their own seedlings from ACCF nuts. Please send 1998 dues with your nut request and indicate how many nuts you want to plant.

Of all my plantings, 82 survive: the two tallest are 2" DBH, about 15 feet tall, have flowered and make nuts which I plant. Most of my chestnuts are quite small; none have blight yet. Those are the facts we look for in reports; no need to dwell on losses unless they contain a lesson to share with others. Please send your report now, via e-mail to Lucille at gagriffi@vt.edu. Remember to include your name, state & county.

Integrated management: I have inoculated all my larger grafts which had some blight on them and also one very large graft (2.5"DBH) which had no sign of blight, to launch integrated management for American chestnut revival here. Integrated management produces blight control by combining blight resistance and hypovirulence on ideal sites (N to E facing cove slopes with acid, well drained soils, at low to medium altitude in full sun). The first swollen blight cankers are inoculated with hypovirulence to weaken the disease and assist survival through the winter months when chestnuts are dormant.

Hoping that in future years we may be able to inoculate the grafts and resistant trees of our cooperators, I continue to write grants. Many granting organizations request matching funds. The Stuart B. Avery Wildlife Fund of the Sierra Club Foundation has recently contributed \$500 to this cause. If you have not sent 1998 dues, please do so now: they count!

Bad news: A severe storm up in our seed orchard has taken out the tops of several trees where cankers had weakened the trunks, and everything over 12 feet up on the L.P. Gault is dead, also. We have for some time now realized that our seed orchard exists in an unfavorable environment. This further confirms Gary's view that high elevation (3,000 ft) sites are not suitable for blight control. However, because the first priority was for resistance trials in the seed orchard, these trees were not inoculated with hypovirulence in a timely manner (when the first blight cankers appear). This year I began making these inoculations on new, younger stems of the more resistant trees which had new cankers within reach. Thus, in a few years we may learn whether Gary's thesis is correct, or entirely too pessimistic.

Good news: In the Scion Bank, my big (3-year-old!) NC Champ graft has 10 fat burs, and here in the yard, 5 more chestnuts will bear, including y 6-year-old NG McDaniels graft. So we have many small compensations for the big losses, and also, one research triumph: the work of Gary's student, Nancy Robbins, documenting spread of hypovirulent strains of the blight fungus to produce blight control on the three resistant grafted American chestnuts in Virginia's Lesesne State Forest, is to appear in the European Journal of Forest Pathology.

Grafters' reports: 1998 has been the best year for ACCF grafting progress.

Name	state	type of graft	surviving from past years	new in 1998
Ken James	NY	whip	10	70
Arthur Frisbee	NC	bark		15
Lucille Griffin	VA	whip,cleft,bark	26	30
Irving Byers	WV	bark	1	
Greg Richard	VA	bark		4
Carl Mayfield	VA	whip	2	6

Ken James protects his grafts with homemade wire cages. When making his rounds, he noticed regular intervals of 4 or 5 successes or failures and deduced that the scion wood which I sent him was not equally good although all was stored and treated in the same way, and appeared fine. I have made similar observations, so agree that the problem of scion collections is not completely solved.

Arthur Frisbee keeps bears and deer at bay with mothballs, replaced after rains, and sprays to control ambrosia beetles. I have made invisible cages using monofilament line, strung between bamboo poles, to stop the deer, and put mothballs as well on the bear site, inside tree shelters, laid on the side, placed uphill from grafts. I control insect problems, ants and earwigs, with diatomaceous earth, spread at the base of new grafts. I spray pyrethrin on Japanese beetles at the Scion Bank.

1998 Outstanding Cooperators: in Virginia: Jeff Kirwan & Charles Lytton for 4H involvement planting and harvesting, Nancy Arrington for spreading the word through Native Plant Society contacts, and Carl Mayfield for his commitment to protect the Amherst tree, the largest American chestnut surviving within the natural range; in New York, Ken James for establishing and maintaining a very extensive American chestnut revival plot; in West Virginia, Evelyn Smith for spreading the word to assist in grant seeking; in Illinois, Ken Brinker for very careful planning of the largest individual planting made from 1997 seedlings.

Thanks for your support of American chestnut restoration; we look forward to receiving news of any ACCF chestnuts surviving among your plantings, so that we may add them to update the Grower's report.

Respectfully submitted,

Lucille Griffin

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