



The WESTERN CHESTNUT

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Spring 2004

NNGA Announces Annual Meeting for Aug. 15-18 in Columbia, Missouri

by Jerry Lehman

Plans for the 2004 joint NAFEX/NNGA meeting are advancing. It will be the first of its type, being a truly joint meeting of NAFEX (North American Fruit Explorers) and the NNGA (Northern Nut Growers Association). Attendees will be able to attend both nut and fruit sessions for one registration fee. This meeting will be held Sunday, August 15, 2004, through Wednesday, August 18, 2004 with an optional additional day for a field trip to Stark Bros. Nursery. The location is Columbia, Missouri, which is 1.5 hours' drive west of St. Louis on I-70. At the Ramada Inn on I-70, we were able to get a conference lodging rate of \$49.00 per night which includes a restaurant buffet breakfast. All functions will be held in the same building as lodging, except, of course, the field trips.

Board meetings will be held on Saturday and Sunday. Registration will take place on Sunday afternoon and there will be an evening social mixer with cash bar, during which a Dixieland Jazz band will play for your enjoyment. A buffet dinner will be served, followed by members' joint show-and-tell for both groups.

Monday morning welcome addresses and University programs will be followed by papers and the annual NNGA business meeting. The afternoon will be concurrent fruit and nut technical sessions. You may attend sessions on the subjects of your choice. Speakers will be invited from the realms of research, professional growers and back yard growers dealing with various nuts and fruits. Monday evening will feature an auction (not silent) with both groups participating.

On Tuesday there will be a field trip to the University of Missouri Horticulture and Agroforestry Research Center. This will be followed by an optional evening visit to the Les Bourgeois winery and an evening meal overlooking the Missouri River. While at the river, Gordon Kempf, an NNGA member and Lewis & Clark enthusiast, will make a presentation on the Lewis & Clark Expedition. Due to limited seating, only the first 100 reservations for this event can be accommodated. There just isn't any reasonable way to accommodate more. Others will attend a cookout at a buffalo farm and market.

Technical sessions will continue Wednesday morning. The Wednesday

evening banquet will feature speaker Dr. Chiranjit Parmar from the Himalayan Mountain region, who will deliver a slide presentation on nuts and fruits of that area.

Following Dr. Parmar's presentation, the two groups will separate for their respective annual business meetings, which will mark the official end of the conference. There is an optional bus trip to Starks Nursery and one other stop planned for Thursday. As some may wish to start their homeward trip directly from Starks, cars will be invited to follow the bus.

There will be speakers from the University Agroforestry Research center and fruit research. Dr. Jules Janick, well known horticulture author and editor from Purdue, will speak on origins of fruit and fruit breeding and more. Dr. Parmar will also be speaking at the technical sessions with more detail of many of the fruits & nuts from the region. He is planning to bring seeds from the area which will have been previously brought in under USDA permits and inspected by the Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service of the USDA. This material will be available for purchase with proceeds shared. The Local Arrangements Committee is working hard to make this an educational as well as entertaining event.

The NNGA's ladies' group, CAP, is working with Julie Rhoads to organize events for the spouses and those accompanying members on Monday and Wednesday. Nothing has yet been confirmed, but in addition to fruit jams, preserves and crafts on Monday morning, they are considering a tour of State Farm Flower Gardens, a very large and beautiful landscaped area near downtown Columbia. Other possibilities include self-guided tours of the University

Michigan to Host Fourth Annual Grafting Workshop

The Northern Nut Growers Association, Michigan Nut Growers Association, and Michigan Master Gardeners announce the Fourth Annual Grafting Workshop to be held May 22 (beginners) and May 23 (advanced or second day for beginners). Attend one or both.

The Grafting Workshop will be held at Michigan State University in the head house of the greenhouse and conservatory attached to the Plant and Soil Sciences building. If weather permits, outdoor grafting including top working of chestnut trees will take place on both days. The primary plants for practice will be apple and other species.

Everything needed to perfect your grafting skills will be supplied and can be purchased after the workshop including knife, tape, paint, rubber bands, etc. Cost will be \$40 per session. Workshop details can be obtained by emailing Dennis Fulbright at fulbrig1@msu.edu or calling 517-353-4506.

of Missouri campus, their art and archeology museum, and possibly a trip and lunch cruise on the Lake of the Ozarks located about 70 miles south of Columbia.

For families with children, there is also a very large children's playland called "Miner Mike's" located directly across from the Lake Ozark outlet mall which has 125 stores.

The goal is to have something for everyone. Mark your calendars now: Aug 15, through 18 or 19, 2004, and plan to attend this first of it's kind joint meeting.

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A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

It's early March and Spring is upon us in the Northwest. Seventy degrees this week! I have been getting reacquainted with my trees, doing some pruning, locating areas where drainage needs improvement, and comparing a recent soil test with last years foliar analysis in an effort to plan this year's fertility requirement. Its an interesting exercise developing a plan with different varieties, tree ages, apparent vigor and varied soil depth. Pruning strategies and nitrogen needs seem to vary quite a bit from tree to tree around here. If you haven't gotten moving yet, its time to get going!

It's also time to make plans for attending the WCGA annual meeting and orchard tour on the weekend of July 17th and 18th. The venue changes, moving south this year, beginning with presentations and a business meeting Saturday morning in Stockton, California. The nearby Best Western Stockton Inn will be the headquarter hotel (877-293-8697). The planning details are still underway, but will be posted at <wcca.net> as soon as available. Email or regular mail notices will follow. Its not too late to make suggestions or volunteer. Your input is of great importance.

Changes are coming to the Newsletter too. After years of dedication, Editor Carolyn Young will be moving on to other projects sometime later this year. Carolyn's professional effort has been a principal component in building our membership and clout, and for that we should all be thankful; not to mention being thankful for all of the informative articles she has inspired or captured over the past few years! Just as board members come and go in an effort to keep the organization fresh and thinking, Carolyn says its time for a new perspective and fresh look at the Newsletter through another's eyes. That's a notion hard to argue with.

The search for a new Editor is on, and not final as I write this column. Being the Editor is an important and influential position. It's not accurate to look upon it as purely burdensome. It is an opportunity for someone to actively shape this organization, be at the center of activity, learn lots about chestnuts and establish lasting contacts throughout the world. It can also be a skill-building exercise in learning the technical side of assembling a small quarterly newsletter. Carolyn is standing by, ready to help with the transition.

If you or someone you know would be a good candidate, please contact me directly. We hope to have a person or team who will commit to at least four issues in place before long.

Congratulations on your accomplishment Carolyn!

Christopher H. Foster

EDITOR'S NOTES

A member responded to the Nominating Committee's request for names of people who would make good officers and/or board members for WCGA. He said he thought that WCGA needed some new blood. I agree, and it's just as true for the Newsletter Editor as it is for the officers and board members, and so I have submitted my resignation to the board effective upon appointment of another Editor, or with publication of the October 1 issue at the latest.

With this issue I have completed five years as your Editor. I find myself getting stale and feel that the newsletter could do with a fresh approach. It has been a real learning experience as Ray and I have started from nothing and elevated to a productive orchard that actually makes a profit. Much of what we have learned has been a direct result of those of you I've contacted regarding the association and the newsletter. For this I want to thank you all.

I'm an officer in two other organizations and am Show Chair for our all-breed kennel club in addition to breeding and showing basset hounds. I'm having trouble keeping it all "on my plate" and at the same time retaining my sanity.

Carolyn

WESTERN CHESTNUT GROWERS ASSN., INC.

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NOTICE

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Single membership is \$25 per year per person - household membership is \$35. Members receive The Western Chestnut quarterly. For foreign delivery contact the Editor for pricing. Back issues may be obtained by members. Membership applications may be obtained from the Secretary-Treasurer.

POSTMASTER

Send Address changes to WCGA, c/o PO Box 841, Ridgefield, WA 98642.

ADVERTISING RATES

Full page, camera ready (w/1 photo) . \$20.00
Half page, camera ready (w/1 photo) ... 15.00
Quarter page 10.00
Business card (4 issues) 15.00

One classified ad per member per year is free (max 6 lines, \$2.50 ea add'l 6 lines). Ad space may be reserved with full payment but must meet established deadlines. If ad is cancelled, money may be refunded if space is resold. Make checks payable to Western Chestnut Growers Assn., Inc.

All ads and other copy preferred in PC format on disk or email to Carolyn@ChestnutsOnline.com. Ads must adhere to published ad sizes for space purchased. Call for specifics. Otherwise for best results, submit original photographs. Layout of ads will not be done until payment is received. **Send materials to P.O. Box 841, Ridgefield, WA 98642, or Fedex/Express Mail to 29112 NW 41st Ave., Ridgefield, WA 98642.** Call for further info.

PUBLICATION AND DEADLINES

Fall issue	deadline 9/10	mailed 10/1
Winter issue	deadline 12/10	mailed 1/1
Spring issue	deadline 3/10	mailed 4/1
Summer issue	deadline 6/10	mailed 7/1

EDITORIAL OPINION

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Letters to the Editor:

NATIONAL CHESTNUT WEEK

The "National Chestnut Week" concept pumped \$1,000 into our sales this season.

I have never thought that local chestnut sales would be worth the time and effort. We have always relied entirely on sales over the internet (and local markets and wholesalers).

When the Western Chestnut Growers' Association came up with "National Chestnut Week" we sent a press release to our local newspaper (Santa Rosa Press Democrat) stating the basics. Unbeknownst to us, when the agriculture editor mentioned "National Chestnut Week" he also said that we were open for direct sales that week. The story was one paragraph long and was buried in the Business Section. Yet, as soon as it came out the phone began ringing and people began showing up at our barn. That week we sold over \$1,000 in fresh chestnuts directly out of the barn. I would never have guessed there were that many people locally who would go to the trouble of finding us, driving to our ranch and buy chestnuts.

Thanks to the Western Chestnut Growers' Assn. for providing a valuable marketing tool. The extra \$1,000 in sales was pure profit. Because of the success in local sales we have decided to join the local Farm Trails and put a sign on the road letting people know we are here.

*Greg Dabel
Green Valley Chestnut Ranch
Sebastopol, CA*

WCGA WEBSITE

Thank you for the website. I have had many calls.

*Richard Teague
High Rock Farm
Gibsonville, NC*

FULLY RETIRED

Please remove my name from your list as I am fully retired and moving. I regret breaking the tie as I helped organize the group and enjoyed working with the group. Best to all of you.

*Robert Rackham
Corvallis, OR*

WCGA Annual Meeting

Stockton, CA

Friday and Saturday, July 16-17

*Save the dates! Watch the WCGA
website for details*



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Winter in Garfagnana

A Chestnut Holiday

by Carolyn Young

Knowing that we had to be in Austria on business in January, and motivated by Jane Casey's description of the Garfagnana area of Tuscany in her article, published in the last WCGA newsletter, Ray and I decided that Tuscany sounded like a good place to visit to see just how the chestnut industry functions in that part of the world. We had heard that Italy doesn't have just "one" chestnut industry, but several, and that was certainly correct.

We arrived in Castelnuovo di Garfagnana, Tuscany, on a Saturday afternoon and had made arrangements to stay at La Palazzina, an Agriturismo (farm stay) accommodation recommended by Jane. Our host, Stefano Marchi, is on the board of directors of the Agriturismo organization and dedicated to promoting local agriculture in general, and chestnuts in particular. It would be difficult to find someone who is a better representative of an area than this gentleman. La Palazzina is a story in itself. Today it is a complex of one-bedroom fully furnished apartments for rent to tourists at a cost of about half what a hotel room in one of Italy's major cities would cost. It proved to be the perfect base for day trips in the area, and for



The chestnut trees in the Orichella National Park are as old as 600 years. Chestnuts produced by the trees are gathered, dried and milled as they were hundreds of years ago.

those of us who go through withdrawal when we're away from our computers, it even had a computer for guests' use with high speed internet access. It makes for happy campers.

La Palazzina was built by a nobleman about 1800 who established a silk factory on the grounds when silk was a big part of the area's economy. From there it went into the hands of a farmer, and finally to the present owner's grandfather. During WWII, it was occupied by the German army and Marchi's grandfather and his family escaped to the mountains for several years. Eventually it was bombed by the Americans in their liberation of the Italians and returned to the family. Much of the home had to be rebuilt.

I had contacted Marchi several weeks before our arrival and told him that we were interested in seeing the chestnut forests and would really like

to see a metato (stone drying hut) and a flour mill in the area, hoping that he could give us help in finding these. Little did we know what lay in store. He had arranged for us to meet with the President of the Associazione Castanicoltori della Garfagnana, Ivo Poli, the following day.

When we arrived in the village of Brica, population about 50, it was like stepping back in time. The homes in the village were all built of stone and had been there for hundreds of years. We were told later that documentation shows the village was founded about the year 180 A.D. (How fortunate that the Italians have never discovered the U.S. concept of “urban renewal”.)

Here we met Mr. Poli and another gentleman, Gianni Nancesi, who was to act as our translator. We left the village and set off for the Orichella National Park which encompasses a vast chestnut forest. It was snowing and the white of the forest floor provided stark contrast for the 600 year-old trees. We were quite surprised to learn that these trees had been grafted – 600 years ago. Stefano said that the



Gianni Nancesi and Ivo Poli, President of the Associazione Castanicoltori della Garfagnana, discuss the grafted 600 year old tree. The bark below the graft spirals upward, while the bark on the grafted portion is vertical.

Romans brought the art of grafting to

the area about the time the village was founded and it had been practiced since then. The tree below the graft had a gentle twist to the bark, while the tree above that grew straight up. These trees have been producing for all these years. They have not suffered from phytophthora. They have not suffered from shothole borer. They have not suffered from blight. No one does regular foliar analysis. No one fertilizes or adds potassium. And the surprising thing to us was that they grow at 1200 meters – over 3900 feet in elevation. This should certainly lay to rest the rumors that constantly come up about chestnuts not growing at such an elevation. Obviously tolerance for an elevation has to do with the cultivar and not the chestnut in general.

We were surprised to learn that while people in the Garfagnana area may eat some nuts roasted during harvest season, their entire effort is put towards producing chestnut flour, and from the flour, other products which are sold on the retail market – tagliatelle, biscotti, chestnut puree, chestnut liqueur. These folks have a more comprehensive marketing plan for their products than I have seen anywhere in the U.S. for chestnut prod-



Stefano Marchi looks into the upper level of the metato where the chestnuts are placed to dry. A metato of this size can accommodate a quantity of about 4000 lbs. Regulations require that the nuts be dried for 40 days before they can be milled.



Chestnuts are laid on loose slats spaced about the thickness of the bamboo stick shown. Heat and smoke from the chestnut log fire below drifts up through the slats to complete the drying process.

ucts. Their marketing plan relies on maintaining an old way of life. It's all about nostalgia, which any marketing expert in the United States will tell you is what sells today. They want people to visit their area and buy their products, yet they also sell through all the local grocery stores, and their products command nearly twice the price of the same product produced on a large-scale basis in the larger cities. We found proof of this in several grocery stores. They emphasize quality above all and everyone involved in their association is committed to that. The products are sold as "biologic", the equivalent of our organic products, and the packaging is as professional as you'd find in any major supermarket in the U.S.

The forests are partially federally owned and partially privately owned. In order to gather nuts villagers must obtain a permit and there is a quota that must not be exceeded. The purpose is to maintain high prices for their products. Because of the high cost of labor in Tuscany, families work together to harvest the nuts and are totally responsible for the drying process which must be monitored 24 hours a day for over a month.

The burrs are opened in the forest and only the nuts themselves picked up. They're placed in cloth bags strapped to their shoulders. Following harvest the nuts are taken to the local metato, a stone drying hut where they are put on the upper level on loose slats, carefully spaced, about 2 ft. deep. A 15' x 15' metato has a capacity of about 4000 lbs. On the bottom level

a fire is built using large chestnut logs. When it burns down they put the chestnut "duff" on top to create smoke that seeps up through the slats to dry the nuts. We were told that the law requires that they dry the nuts for 40 days. It requires three people to tend the drying process. The fire needs to be turned over every few hours during the drying period.

Each of our hosts assured us that while the smoke goes up through the nuts it does not cause any change in flavor because the shell keeps the smoke out of the nut meat. Obviously each of us has different tastes and I'm sure that since these people have eaten the flour all their lives their palates are different than those of Americans who lack that experience. We found the flour to be very smoky in taste, yet the texture and consistency was exemplary. It was silky smooth and there was no pellicle visible as we've seen

in imported flours from Italy which might add a bitter taste.

Once the nuts have been dried for the required amount of time they are shelled. The nuts are put in what appears to be a gunny sack and then beaten against an object, perhaps a tree stump, until the shells break off. At this point they are carefully sorted by hand at which time any remaining part of shell and/or pellicle is removed. Only perfectly shelled nuts are used to produce flour.

We went to a mill that was originally constructed sometime during the 1400's. The millstone had been fashioned many years ago and is still in use. It sits in a large box-like area and the flour is deposited into the box from which it is scooped out and then sent out for packaging. The mill is powered by a stream and uses an inventive system to control the power. We met the gentleman who runs the mill and



Ivo Poli explains how the mill works as Gianni Nancesi translates for us. (1) The water comes in from the stream. (2) The stream is directed toward or away from the "spoons". (3) When the water hits the spoons it turns the shaft which turns the millstones on the floor above.



A sample gift basket of the products produced in the Garfagnana area includes chestnut flour, chestnut biscotti, chestnut puree, chestnut tagliatelle, chestnut liqueur and chestnut honey. All of the products can be found in local grocery stores and command a good price.

were impressed with his attitude toward producing only a quality product. He discussed with us the problems encountered when some people bring him nuts to mill that have not been dried for the appropriate length of time, and showed us the tools he

must use to clean the millstones when they “gum up” from the partially dried nuts.

Having knowledge of all the rules and regulations for doing any kind of food processing here in the U.S. we asked how they were able to produce

flour in this rather primitive way and not be subject to all the various health and food handling regulations. We were told that their regulations are every bit as strict as ours, but that the government allows them to maintain the old methods as a way of preserving this important part of their culture.

One of the distinct advantages that the folks in the Garfagnana area have is that the Italian government subsidizes their marketing efforts, and what Italy doesn't subsidize, the European Union does. This came as quite a surprise. Marketing costs are not an insignificant item in any American grower's budget, at least for those of us who stress retail sales. It becomes obvious then, why American growers have difficulty competing with the imported Italian chestnuts.

We left the area with good feelings for these chestnut folks. They are astute in their business practices, they value what they have and they understand that quality cannot be compromised.



Don't forget that members get a free classified ad once a year. Take advantage of a good opportunity to make others aware of your products or services.



Left to right: Ray and Carolyn Young, Ivo Poli, Stefano Marchi, and our hostess at her home in Brica, Martina with her husband behind and parents at the right. Gracious hosts. Astute business people.

WCGA CLOTHING ORDER

Here's another opportunity to promote the Association. The following clothing items are available with the WCGA logo for association members.

Please complete the order form and mail with your check payable to WCGA, or VISA/Mastercard number to Sandy Bole, Ladd Hill Orchards, 15500 SW Roberts Rd., Sherwood, OR 97140 or Fax your order to 503-625-1937.

Item No.	Description	Sizes available	Colors available	Unit price
K420	Pique Knit Short-sleeve Polo Shirt	Unisex sizes XS-4XL	White, Ivory, Oxford, Stone, Yellow Faded Blue, Red, Faded Olive, Burgundy Forest Green	\$34.00
K420P	Pique Knit Short-sleeve Polo Shirt w/Pocket	Unisex sizes XS-4XL	White, Stone, Faded Blue	\$38.00
L420	Ladies Pique Knit Short-sleeve Polo Shirt	Sizes S-XL	White, Stone, Yellow, Faded Blue, Red	\$34.00
PC61	Men's/Women's Cotton Knit T- Shirt	Sizes S-2XL	White, Ash, Yellow, Natural, Stonewashed Blue, Stonewashed Green, Violet, Colonial Blue, Red, Spruce	\$16.00
SP10	Long-sleeve Denim Shirt	Sizes XS-4XL	Faded Blue	\$31.00
SP11	Short-sleeve Denim	Sizes XS-4XL	Faded Blue	\$31.00
L600	Ladies Long-sleeve Denim Shirt	Sizes S-XL	Faded Blue	\$34.00
83062	Crewneck Sweatshirt 80/20 Cotton/Poly	Adult sizes S-2XL	Ash, Heather, Bluegrass (slate blue), Wine	\$46.00
CP82	Brushed Twill Baseball Cap adj. closure		Khaki, White, Red, Royal	\$15.00
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Note: All items are 100% cotton, unless otherwise noted.

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Shipping	\$ 5.00
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Total Order \$

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1/03-10/03



2004 Membership Renewal / Application Western Chestnut Growers Assn., Inc.

\$25.00 individual member
\$35.00 household membership
\$26.50 Canadian individual member
Total amount enclosed
\$ _____

Date

(Please print)

Member
First Last

Farm/Business/Organization Name

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City State/Province Zip/Postal Code

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Email: Website URL:

The following information is **voluntary** on your part, but will help your association better understand the growth and status of the chestnut industry. Check those boxes that apply:

- | | | | |
|--|--|--|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial Grower | <input type="checkbox"/> Prospective Commercial Grower | <input type="checkbox"/> Researcher/Educator | <input type="checkbox"/> Hobbyist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nursery | <input type="checkbox"/> Consultant | <input type="checkbox"/> Vendor | |

Acreage in chestnuts:

- | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> < 1 Acre | <input type="checkbox"/> 1-5 Acres | <input type="checkbox"/> 6-20 Acres | <input type="checkbox"/> 21-50 Acres | <input type="checkbox"/> 51 + Acres |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|

Chestnuts first planted:

- | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-1990 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1990-1993 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1994-1997 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1998-2001 | <input type="checkbox"/> Not yet planted |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|

Percentage of seedlings:

- | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sell grafted trees | <input type="checkbox"/> Sell seedlings | <input type="checkbox"/> Sell scion wood | <input type="checkbox"/> Sell seed nuts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sell nuts retail | <input type="checkbox"/> Sell chestnuts whsle | <input type="checkbox"/> Sell mail order | <input type="checkbox"/> Sell on-line |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sell at farmers' mrkts | <input type="checkbox"/> Sell at farm stand | | |

Cultivars grown:
.....

2002 Production: lbs.

Photocopy this form and send with your check for \$25.00 (individual member), \$35.00 (household membership) or \$26.50 (Canadian individual membership) made payable to Western Chestnut Growers Assn., Inc. to Ray Young, Secy/Treas, PO Box 841, Ridgefield, WA 98642.



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