



The Chestnut Grower

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Chestnuts: Tree nuts?

When it comes to marketing chestnuts, the task should be easy from a nutritional standpoint, right? This food product is gluten-free, low in fat, high in vitamin C and cholesterol-free. In addition to all of these things though, chestnuts are also technically classified as a tree nut in the FDA's Food Allergen



Labeling and Consumer Protection Act (FALCPA) of 2004. Chestnuts must be labeled as tree nuts, which are classified as a "major food allergen" by the FDA. In addition to the technical definition of tree nuts as allergens, another connotation exists. Tree nuts are also viewed as fatty and oily by many.

The Chestnut Grower is aware of two different pushes to get chestnuts classified as something other than tree nuts, one due to the allergy issue, the other due to the fatty connotation.

If you have thoughts on these movements or information that might be helpful, please contact Michael Gold at goldm@missouri.edu, Carolyn

Young at Carolyn@ChestnutsOnLine.com and/or Dennis Fulbright at fulbrig1@msu.edu.

Here is a sampling of recent correspondence on this issue:

From Dennis Fulbright:

"We have had a consultant looking into chestnut and its potential allergenic issues. In brief emails with Dr. Steve Taylor at U Nebraska, Lincoln (He's among the nation's top experts on food allergens), he advised that the latex allergy is the most common one associated with chestnuts. The low presence of chestnuts in the market likely play into very low incidents, and not a lot of study on the subject. It appears that there is no known correlation between other tree nut allergens and chestnuts. (cont. pg. 8)"

Glatt's Grant

by Michelle Hall, University of Missouri Center for Agroforestry

Grant Glatt, Cedar Hill, Mo., said the memory of planting trees with his father as a child has

stuck with him. About 13 years ago he began "tinkering" with black walnut trees for nut production on his and wife Joyce's 380-acre farm. Before that, the farm was used only for wildlife and some hay production. Now, he is leaping into the chestnut business, with the help of a North-Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Farmer Rancher grant.

When he planted the black walnut trees and joined the Missouri Nut Growers Association, (cont. pg. 9)

See SARE's Web site at <http://www.sare.org/>

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A Message from the President

MIKE GOLD
UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI
CENTER FOR AGROFORESTRY

Chestnut harvest season is upon us. It is my pleasure to join efforts with all U.S. chestnut growers in the hopes that through our combined efforts the future will be one

of healthy profits, market growth and happiness along the way.

One of the better kept secrets. Growing chestnuts and knowledge of their market potential remain one of the better kept secrets among U.S. specialty crops. A few fortunate, creative, hard-working individuals are making real profits growing and selling chestnuts in the USA. For those that know the crop and the market, prices are strong, and demand is high, above and beyond what is currently produced.

The chicken and the egg. U.S. chestnut growers represent an industry in its infancy. At present, it is hard to get state government, land grant universities or the federal government to take notice and begin to provide a support system for the industry at the current (small) level of national production. However, with foresight and financial support, these same entities could help growers to develop our industry at a much more rapid pace. One reason land grant universities are not yet involved is the size of the chestnut industry, barely on anyone's radar screen. Money talks in the land grant system, either in the form of available grant dollars or in response to requests (pressure) from grower groups with financial clout.

Only three institutions come to mind that are presently hard at work to help develop the U.S. chestnut industry: Michigan State University (Dennis Fulbright and colleagues), the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (Hill Craddock – a one man show) and the Center for Agroforestry at the University of Missouri (Ken Hunt, Michele Warmund and a few others). In the private sector, The Empire Chestnut Company (Greg Miller), provides a wealth of practical information. In concert with Michigan State is their grower group, CGI. Together they have had some success getting value-added equipment purchased through grants including their commercial chestnut peeler.

Where else might growers and Universities look for financial support? For individual growers, small successes have also been found with the USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program. SARE offers Farmer Rancher grant awards up to \$6,000 per individual, or up to \$18,000 for small-group efforts. More thoughts on that in the next issue.

Looking across the USA, I see a bright future in chestnut production if we work together and keep at it. I wish you all a successful harvest season.

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Single membership is \$25 per year per person – household membership is \$35. Members receive The Chestnut Grower 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.

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PUBLICATION DEADLINES

Fall issue deadline 9/15 mailed 10/15
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Chestnuts Growers of America Go Nutty in Michigan

by Michelle Hall, University of Missouri Center for Agroforestry

About 30 members attended the Chestnut Growers of America annual meeting, July 20-22, in East Lansing, Mich. The meeting was hosted by Dr. Dennis Fulbright and Mario Mandujano with assistance from Michigan State University graduate students.

Friday featured a dinner at Dr. Fulbright's residence, with major help from his lovely wife, Janie Schneider. Among the festivities and refreshments were chestnut beer and chestnut hummus.

Saturday included the annual business meeting, where Dr. Fulbright was a surprise addition to the ballot as vice president, and accepted. Your other officers for 2007-08 are Mike Gold, president; Ray Young, secretary/treasurer; and directors Lucienne Grunder, Charlie NovoGradac, Bill Nash and Sandy Bole.

Presentations were given on the Michigan chestnut industry by Roger Blackwell of Michigan co-op Chestnut Growers Inc.; Carmen Medina-Mora, graduate student in the department of plant pathology at Michigan State University,

on genetics of chestnut cultivars; and Irwin Donis, graduate student, plant pathology, about spoilage in mechanically peeled chestnuts. The Missouri chestnut industry was discussed by

Ken Hunt, research scientist, University of Missouri Center for Agroforestry, who spoke on cultivar performance at the University of Missouri Horticulture and Agroforestry Research Center; and Mike Gold, associate director, Center for Agroforestry, who discussed research at the Center for Agroforestry. Many fun

chestnut-related items were auctioned off during the raffle, and Ray Young gave out information about the Controlled Atmosphere Long Life Module, which helps keep chestnuts fresher longer. After lunch, tours took the group to see CGI's mechanical peeler and large cooler, which was a big highlight. Freshly-peeled chestnuts were sampled by all. Chestnut Growers then

visited two orchards, one with trees more than 40 years old; another with a newer crop of trees in all stages of grafting, where attendees spotted a sandhill crane that has served as an effective bug exterminator, according to the landowner.

Saturday finished with a meal at Hershey's Steak and Seafood in East Lansing.

Bright and early Sunday Chestnut Growers met up again to head out of town. This trip took the group to Michigan State University's Clarksville Receiving and Storage Facility. After Donis' presentation conclusion and information from Mike Gold on promoting National Chestnut Week, (cont. pg. 6)



Larry Reaume's seedling Chinese chestnut orchard is 50 years old and includes some trees true to American chestnuts.



Chestnut products from Chestnut Growers Inc. are displayed at the facility visited in Jackson. This is where attendees were also able to see the peeler, the only commercial one in North America.



Mike Gold speaks to the Chestnut Growers about the University of Missouri's chestnut activities through the Center for Agroforestry.

More from 2007 Annual Meeting: Minutes

Chestnut Growers of America Minutes of the Annual Meeting July 21, 2007

Call to order: The meeting was called to order by President, Lucienne Grunder, at 8:35 a.m. at Michigan State University.

Secretary/Treasurer's Report: Ray Young passed out a copy of the financial statement.

Old Business: There was no old business.

New Business:

International Meeting

Ray Young said that he had discussed the possibility of an international meeting of growers from Australia, New Zealand and the U.S. to be held in Australia in early 2009. He asked how many might be interested in attending such a meeting. Nine people indicated interest. He will get back with John Morton, President of the Australian growers' association.

Elections

Dennis Fulbright accepted the nomination of Vice President. With the slate now complete, Sandy Harrison moved and Carolyn Young seconded a motion to accept the slate as presented. Motion passed. The new officers are as follows:

President	Mike Gold
VP	Dennis Fulbright
Sec/Tres	Ray Young
Directors	Lucienne Grunder
	Charlie NovoGradac
	Bill Nash
	Sandy Bole

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 9 a.m.

Respectfully submitted

Ray Young

Secretary/Treasurer

More from 2007 Annual Meeting: Spoilage Problems in Chestnuts

Irwin Ronaldo Donis Gonzalez, graduate student in plant pathology at Michigan State University working in Dennis Fulbright's laboratory, presented information on microorganisms associated with storage of chestnuts.

He found that organisms such as *Penicillium* sp., *Fusarium* sp. and *Aspergillus* sp. are causing spoilage problems when storing sweet Michigan chestnuts. He also reported on a problem Michigan chestnut growers are experiencing when chestnuts are peeled on Chestnut Growers Inc.'s mechanical peeler. For the most part, there is only a problem when the chestnuts are stored for relatively long periods of time without freezing.

Donis said his work suggested that bacteria and yeast often show up at the point when they go through

the skin separator part of the peeler. He explained that once one contaminated chestnut goes through the peeler, others can easily become affected by the organisms left behind.

"Losses in storage could be about 25 percent between harvest and consumption and may be greater than the economic gains achieved by improvement in production," Donis said.

An essential factor for chestnut spoilage susceptibility is that chestnuts have a low percentage of oil which acts as a natural protector in most nuts.

Donis said they are looking at ways to detect the organisms in the chestnuts, prevent the organisms from attacking the chestnuts and also ways to use a curative after the organism (**cont. pg. 6**)

More from 2007 Annual Meeting: Joining forces: chestnut co-op

by Michelle Hall, University of Missouri Center for Agroforestry

Pooling resources can mean big benefits to chestnut growers, according to Roger Blackwell, president of the Chestnut Growers Inc.

The 40-member co-op was formed in late 2001 and was officially incorporated in 2002. Blackwell said the main idea behind forming the co-op was to help market and distribute members' chestnuts while bringing them top dollar.

"We basically pull together our crop of chestnuts and hopefully together get a reasonable price for the chestnuts," said Blackwell, who has been growing chestnuts since 1989.

Chestnut Growers Inc. has grown to include developing value-added products to again increase members' return on their chestnuts. In addition, they have the only commercial chestnut peeler in North America, which means the members can bring their chestnuts to a "receiving station" to be processed quickly and efficiently. The co-op will bring in about 35,000 pounds this harvest year between all of their growers. The co-op has the potential to exceed 100,000 pounds on average over the next three years, Blackwell said.

"We thought consumers generally don't know a lot about chestnuts and how to use them," he said of their value-added ventures. "We have done a lot of research with Michigan State University with chefs and how they'd like to use chestnuts."

They found that frozen, peeled chestnuts were "very appealing" to chefs for their ease of use and storage. They have focused on bringing this product to their customers – and it doesn't hurt that they also found

chefs were willing to pay upwards of \$12 per pound for saving time of preparation of chestnuts to use in their menus.



Roger Blackwell speaks to attendees at the recent Chestnut Growers of America annual meeting.

The group also has received a grant for creating a dehydrated chestnut chip product to be shelf stable for years.

"The intent of the co-op is to bring benefits back to the growers; increase return on investment," Blackwell said. "A group of growers has more potential than a single grower trying to enter the marketplace."

As part of membership, growers should provide at least 50 percent of their crop to the co-op and the co-op cannot accept more than 50 percent of chestnuts from nonmembers of the co-op. Growers are paid for these chestnuts by the pound after size and quality are determined, Black-

well said; a certain amount is deducted per pound for handling. Membership fees of \$300 and the purchase of \$25 in stock in the co-op are required. Purchasing the stock allows for one vote at the annual membership meeting, where board members are chosen. The amount of chestnuts each grower provides determines if they get more than one vote at the meeting; more chestnuts equal more votes, Blackwell said.

The co-op is open to anyone, in any location. Although many of the members of Chestnut Growers Inc. are from Michigan, there are also members living in Washington and Iowa, for example.

To contact the co-op for more information, call 1-800-667-6704 or go to <http://www.chestnutgrowersinc.com>

Chestnuts Growers of America Go Nutty in Michigan (cont. from pg. 3)

attendees viewed the sizer, cleaning equipment and ozone chamber. Some then visited the University's chestnut orchard on the grounds or other parts of the farm.

For both chestnut novices, like the author of this article, and experienced growers, the weekend was informative, collegial and entertaining.

'Til next year, happy growing! CGA

Spoilage Problems in Chestnuts (cont. from pg. 4)

has colonized the nut. Work is being done to determine if methods such as X-ray, ozone-water, Peroxyacetic acid, chlorine or others might eliminate the organism problems. In addition, sanitization of the peeler is vital. The goal is to use environmentally friendly strategies, Donis said.

This harvest season they plan to monitor the organisms in the field, during the peeling process and during storage; and continue with seeking management strategies.

Donis said they hope this work will ensure a quality product and extend the shelf life of fresh and peeled chestnuts.

Some of Donis' findings:

- *Chestnuts are more contaminated when harvested from orchard floor*
- *There is typically more mold on the hilum than on the shell and kernel*
- *There is typically more bacteria and yeast on the shell than on the hilum and kernel*
- *There are typically more organisms on the outer part of the chestnut than on the kernel*
- *The amount of microorganisms increases significantly during 90 days of storage, then stabilizes and sometimes decreases after 120 days*



(Top to bottom) Left: Lefever orchard tour. Right: Peeler first heats chestnuts. Left: The peeler in action. Right: Mario Mandujano at the peeler. Left: Dennis Fulbright speaking. Right and left: The sorter in action.



Recipes/product information

To make **chestnut hummus**, as the Fulbrights did Friday night, simply substitute chestnut chips for chick peas in your favorite hummus recipe. To prepare the chips, place two cups of water in a saucepan. Cover and bring water to a boil. Add 4 oz. chestnut chips, reduce heat to simmer and continue heating for 20 minutes. Stir occasionally to prevent burning. Puree chips in blender, add ingredients from favorite hummus recipe, blend and serve. Chestnut chips are available from CGI at <http://www.chestnutgrowersinc.com/>

The Fulbrights also served **chestnut beer** Friday night, which was a big hit. The beverage is "Fuego del Otono" and is brewed by Jolly Pumpkin Artisan Ales. This year's batch will be available mid-October and can be purchased wholesale from the brewers in Dexter, Mich., – it cannot be shipped, however. See their Web site at <http://www.jollypumpkin.com/>

Rose Powell brought this sweet treat Saturday:

Cheesecake pie garnished with chestnuts & maple syrup

- 1 3.4 oz. box instant cheesecake pie filling or chocolate pudding mix
- 1 12 oz. jar chestnuts in maple syrup
- 1 8 oz. tub of whipped topping
- 1 9 oz. graham cracker pie crust

Prepare pie filling per instructions on box. Spoon into pie shell. Refrigerate at least one hour to set. Meanwhile, slice chestnuts into eighths and return to the syrup.

Prior to serving, cover the pie with whipped topping. Cut into serving size pieces and place on plates. Microwave chestnuts in syrup to warm. Drizzle chestnuts in syrup over each serving.

To find the maple chestnuts, go to http://www.earthy.com/Earthy_Delights_Michigan_Chest_P892.cfm



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Chestnuts: Tree nut? (cont. from front page)

“However, we now have found that the Feds have done something completely different. Summarizing:

“What it comes down to is simply that the FALCPA law says they are tree nuts and therefore they must be labeled as such (and by implication treated as such in the food processing sector).

“Furthermore, if the chestnut industry wants to make an argument that chestnuts are not tree nuts or that chestnut protein is non-allergenic or that chestnut allergen protein is present only in low levels below a threshold of concern, it’s up to the industry to petition the FDA. The reality is that there is no defined ‘threshold,’ and only when the thresholds are defined can we petition – a bit of a catch 22.

“So, the law is the law, and science will not carry the day until the science is on record. And that will be a whole other investment by some part of the industry at some future date.

“In further inquiries to the FDA, its representative provided the following insight:

“‘Regarding your question asking about the inclusion of chestnuts on FDA’s list of tree nuts in our FALCPA industry guidance document, please see the last paragraph at the bottom page 6 of the attached Senate Committee Report that accompanied the bill that became the law known as the Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act of 2004 (FALCPA). That paragraph explains the Senate Committee’s view of what the term ‘major food allergen’ should mean in plain English. It also describes the term ‘tree nuts’ in more detail as follows: ‘For example, the term ‘tree nuts’ refers to a variety of individual nuts, including almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, chestnuts, filberts/hazelnuts, macadamia nuts, pecans, pine nuts, pistachios, and walnuts.’ This information along with other considerations was used to develop the list. We have received several questions regarding why certain tree nuts are on the list. In a future edition of our

FALCPA questions and answers, FDA will describe the process it used to develop the list. You also asked about how to access docket number 2005D-0279 to review the public comments FDA has received on our FALCPA industry guidance document. To access that docket, please click on the following link:
<http://www.fda.gov/ohrms/dockets/dockets/05n0279/05n0279.htm>.

‘We hope that this information is helpful to you.

‘Sincerely,

‘Rhonda R. Kane, MS, RD Consumer Safety Officer (HFS-820) Food Labeling and Standards Staff (FLSS) ONLDS / CFSAN / FDA’

From Carolyn Young:

“I just received this email from Ian Patterson. Ray and I met Ian and his wife last year in Australia and spent a weekend helping them harvest. Ian is an M.D. who practices in Melbourne but his interest is his chestnut orchard about 5 hours away from there about 100 miles into the outback.

“I think his proposal has merit. One of the first questions we get is about shelf life of our flour. People think about hazelnut flour and almond flour that have to be refrigerated or frozen. We’ve tested our chestnut flour for up to 8 months and know that if the nuts are dried properly the flour will last a long time. For our tests I bagged samples of flour. I put half in the freezer and half on a kitchen shelf. Each month we’d take bags out and taste them. At 8 months none of us (the Boles and Ray and I) could tell which was which. While there may have been some minor chemical changes, we weren’t able to discern them. If we could allay consumer concern by explaining that chestnuts are part of the ‘floury’ group it might be helpful. If we could identify the nutritional benefits from this group it would also be a good selling point.

“What do you think?

(cont. pg. 10)

Glatt's Grant (cont. from front page)

Glatt became part of a tree-growing network of sorts in Missouri. He met Ken Hunt, Mike Gold and Michele Warmund from the Center for Agroforestry at the University of Missouri. They soon encouraged him to try Chinese chestnut trees as well and Gold told him of the grant opportunity.

"I won't see the timber but the nuts I might see one day," he said of deciding to grow chestnut and black walnut trees.

Glatt lives in Jefferson County, Mo., just south of the St. Louis metropolitan area. The county is rapidly growing and is home to many small farms owned by mostly part-time farmers looking to increase farm income. The area is at the edge of the Ozark Mountains and so the terrain is a bit rugged – not great for traditional agriculture – only grazing and hay operations are typically currently performed there. Glatt and Gold felt this was a great spot to try Chinese chestnut trees.

The object of Glatt's project, "Chestnut Trees: A Sustainable Alternative Land Use for Small Farms in Jefferson County," is to demonstrate that Chinese chestnuts can be a profitable alternative for small farms on upland sites.

As part of the grant, Glatt will test three one-acre planting variations. At each site, the same five Chinese chestnut cultivars will be planted at a 30 feet by

30 feet spacing, making 48 trees to the acre. Each site will have three different planting variations, including commercial cultivars-grafted; seed from commercial cultivars grafted to scionwood from commercial cultivars one year later; and same variation as the second but grafted two years later.

The three establishment methods are being evaluated to determine the most cost-effective and practical option for the small producer, Glatt said.

"Survival and growth will be monitored at each site," he said. "Costs to establish each site will be documented in detail. Down the road, production data also will be measured to determine yield variations due to method of establishment."

The grant won't run long enough to see nut production from the trees planted – it ends in December 2008 – so survival, growth rates and differences between the establishment methods

will be the main components of the grant results.

Looking to the future, Glatt said the large ethnic population in the St. Louis area should provide a large market for his chestnuts. He hopes to open a "U-pick" style operation that would bring the buyers to him – this would also provide a way for city dwellers to "get away from the blacktop" for awhile.

"Developing new, economically viable sources of income for small farms is an issue across the nation," Glatt said. "If you have an idea for a grant, give it a try. All they can do is say no. And it may fly."

See information about grant process, pg. 11



Grant Glatt, above, puts soil into cups to plant chestnut seeds. His wife Joyce, at right, shows some of the growing seedlings.



Chestnuts: Tree nut? (cont. from page 8)

*"Ian's letter:
'Hi to you both*

*'I am endeavouring to remove chestnuts from the general grouping of tree nuts
During the past year I have tried a number of approaches without great success
I recently ended up with CODEX ALIMENTARIUS and their grouping of foods which relates to pesticide residues
Ultimately I have found from this that British Codes [Eurocode as it is called] are generally accepted by CODEX, WHO and FAO and that the researcher was Ian Unwin
In turn I have emailed him in an effort to perhaps divide tree nuts [or dry fruits as one worker advocates] into FLOURY & OILY subgroups
The floury group would only include chestnuts and possibly carobs*

*It is my view that, in this country at least, the wonderful merits of chestnuts from a nutritional perspective are not appreciated because of the general association between NUTS and Fats/Oils
I am reluctant to pursue 'A grain that grows on a tree' because pesticide residues are a problem in grains and not so much in nuts because of their thick coating
If you folk in USA have similar views we might have more success if we band together
There are many in Europe who also might help
I do hope John Morton and Chestnuts Australia can organize something for next year as has been suggested and we will be able to see you again*

*'Cheers for now
'Ian Paterson'"*

Let us know how your Chestnut Week events turned out!

How are you spending National Chestnut Week (Oct. 14-20)? If you had or are having an event at your farm or orchard to celebrate, let us know! Send us photos and a write-up about your activity and we'll include it in the next newsletter.

Send the information to Chestnut Growers of America Newsletter Coordinator Michelle Hall at hallmich@missouri.edu or drop the information in the mail to 203 ABNR, Columbia, MO 65211. Deadline for submissions is Dec. 15.

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Glatt's Grant (cont. from page 9)

To apply for the SARE grant, Glatt had to answer questions such as "Describe the problem your project will address. What is the objective of the project?" "How will you evaluate the success of the project?" and "Why is the problem you are addressing in your project important to your farm and to the other farmers/ranchers in your area and the North Central Region?" He created a budget for the project and put together information on, for example, the terrain of his farm – with this he received help from the county extension agents in his area.

He was told there were 121 proposals received for the grant; 51 were recommended for funding. Twenty-eight people reviewed the proposal for SARE, including educators and other farmers and ranchers, Glatt said. The Web site for Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education is <http://www.sare.org>

State of the Chestnut Business on the West Coast

From Carolyn Young

"Our sales since January are significantly ahead of where they were last year at the same time and we've got many pre-season orders already for this year's crop. We're arranging to buy from anyone in the area who wants to sell. Our retail sales on-line have been successful but it sure takes a lot of work.

"We see orchards going out faster than they're going in. What may have been seen as a romantic adventure when folks planted soon becomes reality and people bail out when they see how much work is involved." Carolyn says four orchards in their area are for sale now or have been sold recently.



***Make Plans Now
the 4th International
Chestnut Symposium
– September 2008,
Beijing, China***

On behalf of the 4th
International Chestnut
Symposium of the
International Society for

Horticultural Sciences (ISHS), you are invited to participate in the 4th International Chestnut Symposium. The Symposium will be held Sept. 12-15, 2008, in Beijing.

Program Information: Interested presenters are welcome to submit papers on all aspects of chestnuts, including basic and applied research in the areas of: genetics and germplasm, physiology, production systems, plant and soil nutrition, pests and diseases, post-harvest, nut quality, health benefits and marketing.

Important Dates:

January 15, 2008	Abstracts due to Scientific Committee
March 1, 2008	Author notifications, deadline for receipt of abstract
May 15, 2008	Manuscripts due for publication in <i>Acta Horticulture</i> Early registration ends (fee increase after this date)
July 15, 2008	Deadline to pre-conference tours

We look forward to seeing you in 2008!

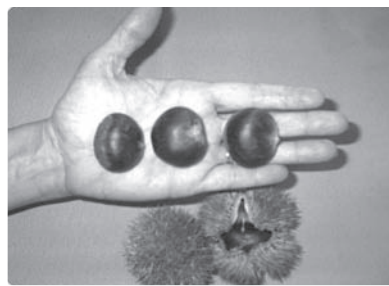
– **Ling Qin** (convener)
Department of Plant Science and Technology
Beijing University of Agriculture

For more information about the symposium, please visit the International Society for Horticultural Sciences Web site at: www.ishs.org/calendar/index.htm or email conference organizers at chestnut2008@126.com



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