



Fig. 1 – Conference attendees enjoyed hay wagon tours of the Nash Nurseries and Orchard properties.

PLANTING SEEDS FOR CONTINUED COLLABORATION AND INNOVATION BETWEEN MSU AND THE NUT-GROWING COMMUNITY

By Gregory Bonito

The 2025 Joint Annual Meeting of the Northern Nut Growers Association (NNGA) and Chestnut Growers of America (CGA) took place August 3–6, 2025 in Owosso and Lansing, MI and brought together a dynamic and diverse group of nut growers, researchers, and tree crop enthusiasts (see group photo on page 4). This year's conference, chaired by Bill and Jon Nash, drew participants from

across the U.S. for a schedule packed with technical sessions, field tours, and social events.

The gathering highlighted Michigan's role in the nut-growing world—particularly through the leadership and involvement of MSU in chestnut research, extension, and commercial innovation. The meeting covered topics such as nut tree

agroforestry, chestnut cultivation across the Midwest, regenerative agriculture, land ownership, and emerging fruit and nut systems and pathogens.

Sunday's activities kicked off at Nash Nurseries (www.nashnurseries.com), a seventh-generation family farm established in 1860, with a "Show and Tell" farm day hay-ride (fig. 1), where attendees viewed

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THE CHESTNUT GROWER

Fall 2025

ABOUT CHESTNUT GROWERS OF AMERICA, INC.

The purpose of Chestnut Growers of America is to promote chestnuts, to disseminate information to growers of chestnuts, to improve communications between growers within the industry, to support research and breeding work, and generally to further the interests and knowledge of chestnut growers. CGA advocates the delivery of only high-quality chestnuts to the marketplace.

CGA began as the Western Chestnut Growers in 1996 in Oregon where about 30 or so chestnut growers understood the need to join forces to promote chestnuts in the U.S. Eventually, they realized that they needed to be a national organization and solicited memberships from every grower in the country, which took the membership to over 100. The name of the organization was changed to Chestnut Growers of America, Inc., and it was granted 501(c)(5) status. Annual meetings take place around the country in an effort to make it possible for a maximum number of people to attend. A newsletter, *The Chestnut Grower*, is published quarterly and distributed by mail and/or email. CGA maintains an extensive resource site available only to members containing information helpful in growing and marketing. Visit chestnutgrowers.org for more information.

2025-2026 CGA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Roger Blackwell, President – Chestnut Growers Inc. and New Era Chestnuts (MI)

Melanie Jones, Vice President of Growth – United Chestnuts and EBB Farms (KY)

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Greg Miller, Director – Empire Chestnut Co. and Route 9 Cooperative (OH)

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COMMITTEES

Communications: Davina Logan (Chair), Melanie Jones, Erin Lizotte, Roger Blackwell

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES

Single membership, \$45; Household membership, \$55; Associate membership, \$60. Members receive *The Chestnut Grower* quarterly. Emailed newsletters are included. Mailed newsletters are an additional \$5 per year. A \$10 late fee is applied to membership renewals submitted after May 1.

ADVERTISING RATES

Full page \$20.00, half page \$15.00, quarter page \$10.00, business card (4 issues) \$15.00, classifieds FREE. Email ads to chestnutgrowersofamerica@gmail.com. Send payment for ads to Joel Hubbard, P.O. Box 445, Social Circle, GA 30025-0445. Make checks payable to Chestnut Growers of America, Inc. OR visit www.chestnutgrowers.org/paydues.html to submit payment online via PayPal.

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Hello Chestnut Growers of America,

Our meeting in Lansing, Michigan, August 3rd through August 6th, 2025, was well attended. Chestnut Growers of America and Northern Nut Growers Association Council jointly shared the 2025 Annual Conference this year. We all had a wonderful time together. CGA wants to give a special thank you to Bill and Jon Nash for their contributions and leadership to this summer's great Annual Meeting.

In this newsletter you will find some updates, as we have selected a new newsletter committee. The members are Melanie Jones, V.P. of Growth, CGA, grower member Davina Logan, Erin Lizotte (MSU), and me on the committee. We will provide the articles needed for our quarterly publication. One of the articles is from Dr. Greg Benito on "Planting Seeds for Continued Collaboration and Innovation between MSU and the Nut-growing Community." Another article is provided by Ron Tanner surveying international trade, industry preparedness, and regulatory activities.

CGA wants to thank the individuals who have submitted articles for this newsletter, and I encourage others in our organization to provide articles for future newsletters. We are all learning something new each year about growing chestnut trees in orchards.

Next year we plan to have a joint meeting again with NNGA and CGA, on July 31 through August 3, 2026, at the University of Massachusetts Amhurst. The meeting will feature joint and concurrent technical sessions and all-day field tours.

Remember the main purpose of CGA is to promote chestnuts. This includes disseminating information to growers of chestnuts; improving communications between growers within the industry; supporting research and breeding work; and furthering the interests and knowledge of chestnut growers. CGA advocates the delivery of only high-quality chestnuts to the marketplace.

I hope you all have a plentiful harvest in the fall 2025 and a wonderful holiday season.

Best Regards,

Roger Blackwell
CGA President

CHESTNUTS ARE RISING

A GROWTH SEASON FOR THE U.S. CHESTNUT INDUSTRY

Perspective Piece by Melanie Jones, Vice President of Growth, Chestnut Growers of America

A SEASON OF BECOMING

Something is stirring in our orchards—and not just the wind.

Across the United States, growers are walking their land with a new purpose. Rows once planted in hope are beginning to bear. Conversations once confined to sidebars at conferences now spill into strategy sessions, media stories, and market expansion. The chestnut industry in the U.S. isn't just growing. It's waking up.

And if you're reading this, you are part of it.

SIGNS OF GROWTH (YES, THE NUMBERS ARE REAL)

We've always known the potential was there—but now we're beginning to see it.

From the **2024 Annual Chestnut Market Survey** conducted by the University of Missouri Center for Agroforestry and Chestnut Growers of America:

- **2,607 acres** were reported by 59 growers—representing approximately **26% of all U.S. chestnut acreage**.
- A total of **201,038 pounds of chestnuts** were harvested in 2023.
- **68%** of growers reported that **consumer demand is increasing**, and **57%** said that **demand exceeds supply**.
- **32%** of respondents plan to **expand their orchards**, signaling optimism and long-term commitment.
- However, only **5%** of growers reported annual **gross sales over \$100,000**, highlighting both the opportunity and the growth yet to come. (2024 CGA Market Survey)

SALES PRICING HIGHLIGHTS:

- **\$6–\$12/lb** for direct-to-consumer online sales
- **\$4–\$8/lb** at farmers markets
- **\$2–\$10/lb** for on-farm sales
- **\$3.50–\$5.00/lb** in wholesale channels (2024 CGA Market Survey)

While approximately **60% of orchards remain pre-commercial**—not yet in full production—we're nearing a critical mass of growers stepping into harvest, exploring value-added products, and investing in infrastructure.

The roots are deepening. The canopy is widening. The U.S. chestnut industry is entering its next season.

A GROWTH MINDSET FOR A LEGACY CROP

Growth in our industry isn't just about planting more trees.

It's about:

- Opening ourselves to innovation
- Sharing what we've learned (even the hard stuff)
- Embracing late starts, re-starts, and do-overs
- Creating systems that support the growers behind the trees

The growth mindset invites us to be both brave and patient. To admit what we don't know. To try again. To invest in better tools, sharper marketing, and stronger networks—not just because it will help our farms, but because it will move the industry forward.

As growers, we don't just harvest chestnuts. We cultivate resilience.

WHAT YOU CAN DO—RIGHT NOW

Each grower plays a role in shaping the future of chestnuts in the U.S. Whether you're just getting started or you've been in the game for decades, your voice, your story, and your trees matter.

Here's how you can be part of the industry's rising momentum:

1. Be Seen.

Don't underestimate the power of visibility. A single post showing your harvest, your grafting work, or your roasted chestnuts at market can spark someone's curiosity.

2. Tell the Story.

This isn't just a nut. It's a narrative—of regeneration, resilience, nutrition, and climate-smart agriculture. Here is a link to an article touching on the importance of marketing and why we need to pay attention to it: unitedchestnuts.com/marketing-for-chestnut-growers.

3. Support Research.

Universities are working hard on breeding, pest management, and post-harvest handling—but they need grower engagement to keep momentum going. Great examples include Erin Lizotte's orchard establishment work at MSU and the breeding programs at the University of Missouri's Chestnut Improvement Network.

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4. Invite Others Into the Circle.

New growers are joining every year—and they need community. Pay it forward the best you can.

5. Join (or Renew!) Your CGA Membership.

Chestnut Growers of America is more than a directory—it's a movement. If you're already a member—thank you. If not, now's a perfect time to join. Your participation makes the industry stronger. Here is a link to the CGA Membership Form: www.chestnutgrowers.org/chestnut-growers-of-america-flyer.pdf



TOP 10 BENEFITS TO CHESTNUT GROWERS OF AMERICA

- 1 National network & mentorship
- 2 Research & cultivar insights
- 3 Education
- 4 Annual conference & farm tours
- 5 Quarterly magazine/newsletter
- 6 Marketing & PR support to reach customers
- 8 Listing in Find-a-Grower directory
- 9 Advocacy with USDA and grants
- 10 Discounts & partner benefits

www.chestnutgrowers.org



The Chestnut Growers of America 2026 Board of Directors. Left to right: Joel Hubbard, Roger Blackwell, Greg Miller, Tom Wahl, Melanie Jones, and Rick Hartlieb. Not pictured: Steve Jones.

A NEW SEASON OF LEADERSHIP

As the chestnut industry gains traction across the country, the Chestnut Growers of America Board of Directors has entered a new season of leadership—rooted in service, collaboration, and a shared vision for growth.

Looking ahead, the Board recognizes the opportunity—and the responsibility—to evolve how we support our members. As we step into 2026, we're exploring ways to offer more useful tools, elevate grower visibility, and create resources that add real value to your experience. It's early work, but the commitment is real: to grow the organization in ways that reflect the energy of this rising industry.

These are growers who have walked the rows, faced the hard seasons, and stayed committed—not just to their own orchards, but to the future of chestnut farming in the U.S.

The new Communications Committee, chaired by Davina Logan, is focused on helping more people discover the story—and the value—of chestnuts. Through storytelling, education, and media engagement, they're expanding the conversation beyond the farm gate.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD: WHY WE SERVE

"After many years of serving CGA, I'm more optimistic than ever about where we're headed. We're seeing fresh energy, new technologies, and talented members stepping up—and that combination is what will carry this industry forward. It's a privilege to help guide that growth."

— **Roger Blackwell**, President

"Movements don't start with perfection—they start with people who show up. That's who chestnut growers are. We're scrappy, smart, rooted, and rising. We're turning a niche crop into a national movement—and our job is to help make sure the rest of the world sees what we see."

— **Melanie Jones**, Vice President of Growth

"Movements don't start with perfection—they start with people who show up. That's who chestnut growers are. We're scrappy, smart, rooted, and rising. We're turning a niche crop into a national movement—and our job is to help make sure the rest of the world sees what we see." — Melanie Jones

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FDA REMOVES CHESTNUTS FROM “TREE NUT” ALLERGEN CATEGORY

By Amy Miller, Route 9 Cooperative

Good news for US chestnut processors! As of January 2025, chestnuts have been excluded from the types of nuts included in the FDA’s allergen category of “tree nuts.” This category used to include 23 types of nuts but has been reduced to 12 nut types. This means that anyone processing or packaging chestnuts will not be required to label packages with the “tree nut” allergen warning. This is consistent with food allergen guidelines from Europe, which also exclude chestnuts from the “tree nut” allergen category.

The tree nuts that *require* a food allergen label are Almond, Brazil nut, Cashew, Hazelnut/Filbert, Macadamia nut, Pecan, Pine nut, Pistachio, and Walnuts (black, California, heartnut, English/Persian). The tree nuts that are now excluded from the “tree nut” food allergen label are: Chestnut, Chinkapin, Beech nut, Butternut, Coconut, Cola (kola) nut, Ginkgo, Hickory, Palm nut, Pili nut, and Shea nut.

At Route 9 Cooperative, as we have explored chestnut milling and processing with partners and co-packers, one of the biggest concerns has been allergen labels. Before this year, if an existing mill was only processing grains and not handling nuts, adding chestnuts would have meant a requirement to include nut allergen labels on all products. This has been a barrier to adoption of chestnuts in established grain



mills. Hopefully this new ruling from the FDA will open up new partnerships between grain mills and chestnut growers who want to make chestnut flour. Brewers and distillers may also be more willing to incorporate chestnuts in their recipes if they haven’t previously worked with nuts. However, a word of caution to chestnut growers on the flip side: A desirable and marketable element of chestnut flour/products is that they are gluten free. If growers do partner with grain mills, it is important to ensure that chestnut products are not contaminated with gluten. There are lots of details to work out for successful co-packing relationships between chestnut growers and grain mills, but at least now allergen labelling is not one of the hurdles.

SOURCES:

Update to FDA Guidance for Food Allergen Labeling, from the Food Allergy Research & Education Blog, February 7, 2025: www.foodallergy.org/fare-blog/update-fda-guidance-food-allergen-labeling.

Your Quick Guide to: Tree Nut Allergy from AllergyUK: www.allergyuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Tree-Nut-Allergy-v2.pdf.

To learn more about Amy and Route 9 Cooperative, listen as Amy Miller joins host Melanie Jones as a guest on the *Branching Out: Growing Together* podcast here: unitedchestnuts.com/podcasts/from-chestnut-trees-to-sustainability-amy-millers-story.





Continued from page 1...

new tools, seedling varieties, and field practices in an informal and hands-on format. The day concluded with a social hour and welcome BBQ dinner that gave old friends and new faces a chance to connect.

Throughout the conference, MSU's influence was present in both the formal sessions and informal conversations, as several researchers and graduate students shared data, discussed trial results, and networked with growers interested in participating in future research projects.

Dr. **Dan Guyer** of Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering opened the meeting with the keynote address, highlighting MSU's long-standing chestnut

program and its success as a model land-grant partnership that integrates applied research, grower support, and industry development. His talk set the tone for a day rich with technical, practical, and cross-sector content. Dr. **Guo-qing Song**, from Horticulture, presented cutting-edge work on leveraging elite chestnut genotypes, micropropagation, and precision breeding to revitalize the U.S. chestnut industry. His talk emphasized the MSU's commitment to developing and deploying advanced propagation techniques to support growers at scale. PSM graduate student **Marc Friedman** (Bonito lab) presented on the 'Persistence of Truffle Producing Fungi on Tree Nut Hosts', sharing results from MSU's experimental truffle orchard. PSM

graduate student **Dylan Warner** (Bonito lab) presented on "Blight Resistance among Back Crossed Chestnut Cultivars Grown in Tissue Culture." These sessions were followed by two interactive forums: one tailored to beginner growers, covering everything from species selection to postharvest handling, and another geared toward commercial operations, with panels on organic production and accessing export markets.

The second day of the meeting included presentations on topics such as hazelnuts, American persimmon cultivar genomics, pawpaw orchard development, and land access for new growers. PSM's **Carmen Medina-Mora** (fig. 2), a long-time



research assistant to the late Dennis Fulbright, presented on “Impacts of Pollination Biology on Chestnut Fruit Quality.” Erin Lizotte (MSU’s Integrated Pest Management) presented on “*In vitro* and Field Evaluation of Chemical and Biological Products for Chestnut Brown Rot Control (caused by *Gnomoniopsis smithogilvyi*) in Michigan.”

The event concluded with Wednesday’s field tours, which brought attendees to three sites deeply connected to MSU’s research and outreach work. The first stop was the **Chestnut Growers Inc. (CGI) processing facility** in Clarksville, a commercial-scale hub that now handles over 250,000 pounds of chestnuts annually

from local growers. The facility was developed in part through collaboration with MSU Extension, and includes systems for cleaning, sorting, cold storage, and shipping.

Attendees next visited **Beyer’s Orchard** in Paw Paw—home to more than 65 acres of chestnuts—and finished the tour at MSU’s **Rogers Reserve** (www.canr.msu.edu/chestnuts/resources/rogers-reserve/index) in Jackson guided by Dan Guyer and PSM’s **Mario Mandujano**, who demonstrated chestnut harvesting equipment (fig. 3).

Rogers Reserve is a state-of-the-art research site operated by MSU AgBioResearch, and features the region’s

only mechanized fresh chestnut peeling line (fig. 4), capable of processing 2,000 pounds of chestnuts per hour, as well as a kitchen facility for producing chestnut flour, chestnut chips, hazelnut products, and pawpaw-based goods.

Throughout the conference, MSU’s influence was present in both the formal sessions and informal conversations (fig. 5), as several researchers and graduate students shared data, discussed trial results, and networked with growers interested in participating in future research projects.

With record attendance, strong institutional support from MSU, and

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programming that blended cutting-edge science with practical grower experience, the 2025 NNGA/CGA meeting in Michigan was a tremendous success—planting seeds for continued collaboration and innovation in the nut-growing community.

All photos courtesy Jeff Jensen, Iowa Nut Growers Associations (iowanutgrowers.com).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Gregory Bonito (bonito@msu.edu) is an Associate Professor and Mycologist in the Department of Plant, Soil and Microbial Sciences. His general areas of expertise include mycology, plant-fungal interactions, truffle ecology, evolution of bacterial endosymbiosis in fungi; fungal systematics; truffle biology; and plant-fungal-bacterial interactions. 🍄



Fig. 2 – Carmen Medina-Mora with Bill Nash of Nash Nurseries.



Fig. 3 – Dr. Mario Mandujano demonstrated use of a self-propelled chestnut harvester at Rogers Reserve.



Fig. 4 – Part of the fresh chestnut peeling line at Rogers Reserve showing rack of rollers to remove charred pellicles and table for visual inspection of peeled fresh chestnuts.



Fig. 5 – Dr. Gregory Bonito and Northern Nut Growers Association Vice President Jim McKenna confer in an establishing chestnut orchard at Nash Nurseries.



Fig. 6 – Dr. Gregory Bonito and the Deadly String Band provided entertainment at the social before the conference banquet.

U.S. CHESTNUT GROWERS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH SURVEY

By Tanner Rankin, University of Missouri Center for Agroforestry

Tanner Rankin shared information about his research during an interesting presentation at the 2025 NNGA/CGA meeting in Michigan. We all have the opportunity to participate in his extensive survey. Here's a little information about Tanner:

Tanner Rankin is from Berks County, PA and studied Environmental Engineering and Environmental Science at Vanderbilt University. After graduating in 2017, he served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in The Gambia, West Africa, where he fell in love with agroforestry. He worked on several projects, including growing native trees for reforestation, establishing fruit bearing trees for food security, and designing living fences to protect trees from livestock. After returning to the U.S. during the COVID pandemic, he hiked part of the Appalachian Trail and road tripped across the country before taking a job with the National Science Foundation. His passion for trees and agriculture drew him to return to school to learn more about agroforestry in the U.S., so he moved to the University of Missouri to begin a degree in agroforestry. He is currently a PhD student in Dr. Ron Revord's lab performing social science and field research related to chestnuts.

From Tanner:

Greetings, Chestnut Community!

U.S. chestnut growers are needed for a research survey!

The survey covers chestnut growers' motivations, establishment practices, and expectations and is part of ongoing research at the University of Missouri's Center for Agroforestry.

The survey can be taken online using the QR code or at this link: missouri.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3IVgwh376Cko8jc

The survey will take approximately 10 to 20 minutes. Updates on survey data will be provided to participants as soon as winter 2025-26. Eligible survey participants include:

1. Have over one (1) acre of chestnuts planted
2. Have been growing for over one (1) year
3. Currently selling or intending to sell chestnuts

Please contact me at tr3x3@missouri.edu or 610-334-3384 for more information or with questions.

Best,

Tanner Rankin

P.S. You may contact the University of Missouri Institutional Review Board (IRB) if you have any questions about your rights as a study participant, want to report any problems or complaints, or feel under any pressure to take part or stay in this study. The IRB is a group of people who review research studies to make sure the rights of participants are protected. You can reach them at 573- 882-3181 or muresearchirb@missouri.edu. You can reach me, Tanner Rankin, at tr3x3@missouri.edu or on phone at (610) 334-3384.

For now, this survey will be open until December 1st, although there is a chance to keep it open until the start of 2026 in case of low response rate. 🍓



Survey QR code

**SAVE the
DATE!**

**2026
NNGA / CGA
Joint Annual Conference**

Friday, July 31st - Monday, August 3rd

**University of Massachusetts Amherst
Amherst, MA**

WHAT'S NEXT FOR CHESTNUT GROWERS OF AMERICA

Selected dialogue between Melanie Jones and Roger Blackwell from the October 9, 2025 episode of the Branching Out: Growing Together podcast—listen to the full episode here: unitedchestnuts.com/podcasts/roger-blackwell-chestnut-growers-of-america-podcast

Melanie: Roger, welcome back to *Branching Out: Growing Together*. You're president of Chestnut Growers of America (CGA), owner of New Era Chestnuts, and a former president—now vice president—of Chestnut Growers, Inc. (CGI), the Michigan co-op. We met recently at the joint CGA/NNGA conference in Lansing. If you look back 15 years, what progress makes you proudest?

Roger: The people. Every year more growers—especially younger folks—show up eager to learn. They're asking practical questions about planting, growing, harvesting, and how to sell. Seeing orchards mature and that excitement grow has been the best part.

Melanie: Chestnuts are still seen as a niche crop, but they're clearly rising. Why does CGA matter right now?

Roger: Because it's how we introduce chestnuts to more Americans. For years, demand was strongest in ethnic communities—Bosnian, Chinese, or Korean shoppers, for example. Many people at Detroit's Eastern Market had never tasted a chestnut until they tried a roasted one at our stand—nine out of ten loved it. CGA gives education and marketing know-how so more consumers discover chestnuts and more growers succeed.

Melanie: You started when good information was hard to find.

Roger: That's right. Decades ago, there wasn't much guidance on site selection or orchard establishment. Today, CGA's archives and community make a real difference. Not every site is right: look for places where peaches, apples, or blueberries thrive—pH in the 5–6 range is usually promising for chestnuts.

Melanie: Let's talk markets and quality. What's your top advice?

Roger: Refrigeration. Chestnuts are roughly half water. If a buyer wants "two months of inventory," that's a red flag. I ask, "How



many pounds can you sell in 2–3 weeks?" Then we replenish. Keep chestnuts around 32°F and rotate stock. If you see them sitting warm next to peanuts at 70°F, they'll shrivel fast. Fresh, cold-stored product is the key to happy customers and repeat sales.

Melanie: Co-ops?

Roger: They're huge. In Michigan, our CGI co-op has about 35 growers. We aggregate, clean, sort, bag, sell, and move the crop between early November and the end of December. That scale gives us clout and lets growers focus on growing. CGA can help other regions think through co-op models.

Melanie: Sustainability and the long view?

Roger: Chestnuts are a sustainable, long-lived crop—there are trees in Europe that are centuries old. It will be a long time before the U.S. overproduces. Planting now can create steady income in ~15 years, potentially paying for the land over time—if you choose the right site and approach it as a business.

Melanie: People ask about American chestnut restoration versus hybrids or grafted trees for orchards. Your perspective?

Roger: Restoration research on a blight-resistant American chestnut continues, but practical, widely available trees are likely years away. For

commercial production today, I favor quality, region-appropriate genetics and propagation methods—grafted trees and, where feasible, tissue culture. And remember: chestnuts are region-specific. For example, Dunstons can do well in the South, while some European/Japanese types suit northern climates. Not everything grows everywhere.

Melanie: What are new or prospective CGA members looking for?

Roger: Practical playbooks: how to choose land, select varieties, plan harvest, access markets, and—if you scale—how to move nuts efficiently. They want real examples, equipment advice, and connections. That's where CGA's annual meeting shines.

Melanie: The Lansing tour at Rogers Reserve was a highlight. Quick distinction for readers: CGA is the national nonprofit growers' organization; CGI is the Michigan co-op. And Rogers Reserve operates thanks to an MSU-associated endowment dedicated to chestnut research. I think the learning sessions are tremendous and worth the effort to attend.

Roger: Exactly—and that endowment fuels ongoing work without relying on outside funding. It's been a great asset for the industry.

Melanie: Final word of encouragement for people considering chestnuts?

Roger: Join CGA and come to the annual meeting. In four days, you can learn what would take years alone—site selection, varieties, gear, sales channels—and, importantly, you'll meet growers who've done it. I've seen newcomers go from questions to 50-acre success stories because they listened, equipped properly, joined a co-op, and followed through.

Melanie: Perfect. We've got a strong new board at CGA, and we're focused on expanding member resources, education, and smart ways to grow demand alongside supply. Roger, thanks for the time—and good luck with harvest (everyone)! 🍂



Member Spotlight

Brad & Sandy Russell
Chestnuts in the Ozarks | Omaha, Arkansas



With more than 50 years of combined corporate leadership experience, we chose to take a leap of faith and build **Chestnuts in the Ozarks**, our family-owned farm in Omaha, Arkansas.

Brad leads hands-on operations, cultivating orchards, managing equipment, and stewarding the land to ensure the farm thrives day to day. Sandy is currently partnering with Brad in the field while also preparing to expand into strategy, growth, and partnerships, scaling operations, and building connections with restaurants, local markets, and distilleries.

Together, we are committed to regenerative agriculture and sustainable practices

that honor both the land and the community. What started as a transition from corporate life has become our shared calling, combining innovation and tradition, entrepreneurship and stewardship, family and purpose.

For us, *Chestnuts in the Ozarks* is more than a farm. It is a living legacy of growth, resilience, and faith, rooted in the Ozarks and built to be passed down to future generations.

Member tip: This video was produced for free from the Arkansas Farm Bureau: www.instagram.com/reel/DMYKMZ7NhwJ/. 📺

“Together, we are committed to regenerative agriculture and sustainable practices that honor both the land and the community. What started as a transition from corporate life has become our shared calling, combining innovation and tradition.”

— Brad & Sandy Russell

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“If we want CGA to grow, we have to make it more useful and relevant to growers. That means creating better ways to share knowledge—real-time, grower-to-grower, and grounded in the day-to-day work of our orchards. I believe we can build something that becomes a must-have resource for every chestnut farmer out there.”

— **Greg Miller**, Director

“I’m grateful for the opportunity to give back to CGA as the incoming treasurer. Over the years, I’ve received so much help and guidance—especially from Roger Blackwell, Tom Wahl, Greg Miller, Bob Stehli, Dr. Ron Revord, Scott Smith, and Brad and Melanie Jones. I’m looking forward to paying it forward and helping our community continue to grow.”

— **Joel Hubbard**, Treasurer

“Serving on the CGA Communications Committee offers a meaningful opportunity to provide valuable resources, share important updates, and help members feel informed, connected, and empowered. It is through this shared connection that we grow together as an organization.”

— **Davina Logan**, Communications Committee Chair

YOUR VOICE BELONGS HERE, TOO

If you’ve ever wondered whether you belong in this movement, let this be your reminder: you do.

Whether you grow 10 trees or 10,000, sell online or just to your neighbors, make flour, plant in food plots, or dream of intergenerational farms—your voice, your questions, and your passion matter.

We’re building a community, not just a crop.

And there’s never been a better time to be part of it. 📺



Chestnut Growers of America
P.O. Box 445
Social Circle, GA 30025-0445

THE CHESTNUT GROWER

Fall 2025

MISSOURI CHESTNUT ROAST

FESTIVAL




OCT. 18, 2025 | 10 AM - 3 PM


Join the free, family-friendly festivities at the
MU Horticulture & Agroforestry Research Farm

10 Research Center Rd., New Franklin, MO 65274

 Chestnut & agroforestry samples

 Hay wagon rides

 Agroforestry farmers market

 Exhibitors & native plant sales



Center for Agroforestry
University of Missouri



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