

Promoting Chestnuts and Connecting Chestnut Growers

A Quarterly Newsletter published by Chestnut Growers of America, Inc. · chestnutgrowers.org



Tree Shelters: An Experienced Grower's Perspective

By Tom Wahl, Red Fern Farm, Wapello, Iowa | tom@redfernfarm.com

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ree shelters, sometimes called "grow L tubes", are not new, but some new developments in tree shelter technology have made them real game-changers for establishing new plantings of chestnut trees. Tree shelters are translucent plastic tubes 4 inches in diameter and at least 5 feet tall, applied at planting time to young trees, designed to protect the trees and increase growth rate. The best of the new tree shelter designs offer chestnut growers multiple benefits, each one of which makes the tree shelter worth more than twice its cost. When combined, these benefits make the tree shelter an absolutely priceless tool in tree establishment.

Benefits

First, tree shelters dramatically reduce tree mortality. Combined with selection of high-quality nursery stock, proper site selection and planting techniques, and effective weed control, tree shelters can help tree mortality approach zero. As long as you use shelters 5 feet tall or taller, they provide at least 95% protection from deer browse and 100% protection from rabbits. Otherwise, neither of these varmints will allow chestnut trees to grow unmolested. Second, tree shelters make the trees grow much faster and become established much sooner, with less maintenance. Third,

THE CHESTNUT GROWER

Summer 2020

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.

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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 March 1.

Advertising Rates

Full page, camera ready	\$20.00 \$15.00
Half page, camera ready Quarter page	\$15.00
Business card (4 issues)	\$15.00
Classifieds	FREE

Email ads to chestnutgrowersofamerica@gmail.com. Send payment for ads to Jack Kirk, 2300 Bryan Park Av., Richmond, VA 23228. Make checks payable to Chestnut Growers of America, Inc. OR visit www.chestnutgrowers.org/paydues.html to submit payment online via PayPal.

Deadlines

lssue	Deadline	Mailed
Winter	Dec. 20	January
Spring	Mar. 20	April
Summer	June 20	July
Fall	Sept. 20	October

Editorial Opinion

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Message from CGA President Roger Blackwell, Chestnut Grower



I hope all of you and your families are safe and healthy. COVID-19 has caused many of us to hunker down and maintain social distancing and wearing masks. I know we are working with our local health officials to be able to market and sell our fresh chestnuts this season and hope that a vaccine will

be available by next year so we can get back to normal. The CGA Board hopes to have an annual membership meeting in 2021. Right now, we are planning to have the meeting in Pennsylvania in June. More information will follow by the end of this year.

This newsletter should be remarkably interesting for everyone. Tom Wahl has provided a perspective on using tree shelters from an experienced grower. Erin Lizotte from Michigan State University has worked with Michael Reinke and Julianna Wilson, also of MSU, to provide an article describing an emerging pest called black stem borer that they have been seeing in new chestnut plantings in Michigan for some time. This year it seems to be even more prevalent, and the article is meant to raise awareness. Finally, Sara Fitzsimmons from Penn State University has been working with a group that's putting together a 2-part virtual networking event for chestnut growers, particularly those on the east coast, but open to anyone. You can find details on the event in this newsletter.

In the last couple of days, I have received two emails from members of CGA who have received messages requesting money in the form of buying gift cards for Veterans. The emails are signed with my name as President of CGA. These emails are a scam. You will notice that the message is not from my email address. Please do not follow the instructions. I will never send emails to you to request donations. My email has not been hacked, but someone or some group is using my name and title to try and get funds.

I want to thank Rita Belair for all her efforts throughout the year for CGA on The Chestnut Grower Newsletter. We need members to help support her in getting good chestnut articles in our Newsletter. All of you have good ideas on growing and marketing chestnuts to share with each other. Please let her know if you have an idea for an article you would like to write or a topic you would like to know more about by sending an email to chestnutgrowersofamerica@gmail.com.

Remember the purpose of CGA 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

Black Stem Borer: An Opportunistic Pest of Young Orchard Trees Under Stress

By Michael Reinke, Michigan State University Extension, and Julianna Wilson, MSU Department of Entomology

Young orchard trees under stress can attract black stem borers. Proper identification, orchard sanitation, and timing of control measures using ethanol-baited traps will help minimize its spread.

Black stem borers (BSB) were first detected in the United States around 1930. By 1980 they were detected in Michigan but were mainly considered to be a pest of nursery trees because they were rarely seen in commercial orchards. However, since 2010 they have been found infesting trees in young chestnut, apricot, plum, and high-density apple orchards in all the main orchard growing areas in Michigan and across the Great Lakes region including New York, Ohio, Indiana and Wisconsin.

Identification

The black stem borer is a very small – about 2 millimeters – ambrosia beetle (*Xylosandrus germanus*) that attacks



Figure 1. A female black stem borer. Photo by Brad Barnd, BugGuide.net.

stressed orchard and nursery trees. It prefers young trees with trunk diameters of less than 2.5 inches. The insect is rarely seen outside of its galleries and only females emerge from the galleries they create to infest new trees.

The most common sign of infestation includes a round entrance hole that is approximately 1 millimeter in diameter. This hole can have a toothpick-like string of compacted boring dust and frass emerging, and sometimes weeping or oozing of plant sap from it. In significant infestations, multiple holes can be found in a single tree trunk. Holes may appear similar to those made by other small boring insects, such as a bark beetle called the shothole borer (*Scolytus rugulosus*).

Hosts

The black stem borer will infest a wide variety of woody plant species. They can be found in all tree fruit and chestnut species that are grown commercially in Michigan but also infest many common forest tree species found near orchards such as oaks, elms, black cherry, pawpaw, beech, dogwood, and black walnut. Ambrosia beetles as a group are attracted to ethanol, which is naturally produced by injured trees. After a harsh winter, some trees that are in fact injured, but look uninjured, will produce ethanol, which attracts the beetle. Ambrosia beetles do not usually attack

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and generally to further the interests and knowledge of Chestnut Growers. CGA advocates the delivery of only highquality chestnuts to the marketplace. As members of CGA, I hope you can help us to continue to grow CGA and bring new members to our organization.

I hope you all have a wonderful summer and your chestnut production is a record year.

Best regards,

Roger

Roger I. Blockwell

Chestnut Growers Networking Event September 1 & 10

Online Workshop: Building Connections Across the Chestnut Supply Chain

Get the details on this virtual event on page 10.

2020 CGA Member Directory

An updated Member Directory was sent to all CGA members via email. If you have any corrections to your listing, or if you would like to receive a printed copy, please send a request to the editor at chestnutgrowersofamerica @gmail.com.

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tree shelters get chestnut trees to bearing much sooner, reducing the number of years until you get your first nuts to two four, compared to six - ten years for trees protected with cages. You could have your first serious commercial harvest in year six, verses year ten - twelve without a shelter. Finally, tree shelters nearly eliminate pruning on young trees. Tree shelters suppress growth of side branches while the tree is growing inside it, resulting in a clear trunk up to the height of the shelter. You cannot harvest chestnuts on a commercial scale from un-mowed grass, and you cannot mow grass under the drip-line of a chestnut tree unless you have a clear trunk up to 5 – 6 feet. Tree shelters achieve this with little or no pruning. In contrast, a chestnut tree grown without a tree shelter will need to be heavily pruned every year, for years and years. I used to produce a mountain of prunings from every acre of chestnuts, every year. Now, I have less than a pickup load of prunings from over ten acres. You really can't appreciate how much of a reduction in labor this is, until you have done it.

I occasionally hear tree growers say, "I don't like tree shelters. I never use them." When I question them, I always find these growers tried them once, but were using them incorrectly. Tree shelters are tools, and like all tools, they need to be used properly to get optimum results. Incorrect



Figure 1. This photo shows the chestnut tree leaves clearly outlined in the tree shelter. Photo courtesy of Tom Wahl & Kathy Dice.

use can be disastrous, just as it would be to try to drive a nail with a saw or to cut a board with a hammer.

Guidelines

The following guidelines will aid with the proper use of tree shelters, allowing you to achieve the maximum benefits at the lowest cost.

Height

Tree shelters need to be at least 5 feet tall. Four-foot-tall tree shelters are less than

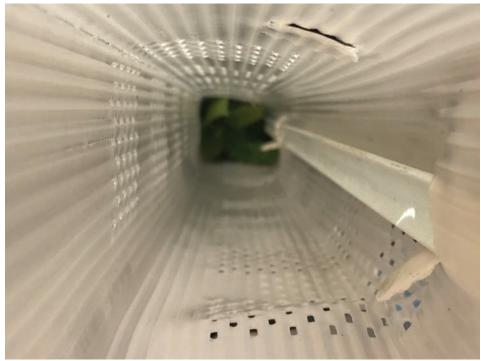


Figure 3. Inside a tree shelter. Photo courtesy of Neal & Cynthia Nowacki.

useless as protection from deer browse. Deer will reach their mouths down inside of 4-foot shelters and bite the tree off at 3 ½ feet (and keep them there). I have never observed browse damage on a tree growing out the top of a 5-foot shelter, but I occasionally hear reports of it. If you have unusually tall deer in your area, you might need to consider 6-foot-tall shelters.

Ventilation

Tree shelters *must be very well ventilated*. I have killed hundreds of chestnuts with unventilated or insufficiently ventilated tree shelters. Well-ventilated tree shelters are a dream come true. The best shelters have screen-like ventilation running from near the bottom to near the top of each shelter.



Figure 2. A ventilated tree shelter. Photo courtesy of Neal & Cynthia Nowacki.

Balance

Tree shelters can rapidly accelerate tree growth. This growth needs to be balanced. I once applied a tree shelter to an 18-inchtall chestnut in May, and by August 1, the tree was 11 feet tall with a single spindly stem and no side branches. The following spring, when the tree leafed out, the weight of the new leaves made the tree droop over like a wet noodle, and the top of the tree touched the ground. You should never let a chestnut get too tall without producing side branches. When the tree is at least 2 feet tall, but less than 3 feet tall out the top of the shelter, pinch off the growing tip at the top of the tree. This will temporarily stop the upward growth and encourage the tree to start putting on side branches. You



Figure 4. Tree shelter, netting, and mulch. Photo courtesy of Neal & Cynthia Nowacki.

may have to go back and pinch off new growing tips once a week, until the desired side branches start growing.

Sometimes the growing tip of a young tree can get caught in the ventilation screen or on the edge of a punch-out hole and get pointed downward. This can result in a goose-neck or drain-trap shaped growth of the trunk. This can happen at the time the tree shelter is applied, or later, as the tree grows. It is important to look down inside each tree shelter at least once a week or so, to be sure the growing tip is pointing upward. If you see a growing tip caught and pointing downward, you can use a long, light-weight metal rod or a stiff piece of wire with a hook on one end, to reach in and down, to hook the growing tip and pull it upward. A long, narrow, straight tree branch can often be fashioned with a hook in one end, for the same purpose. Gray dogwood brush is particularly good for this.

Pests

Paper wasps often build nests inside of tree shelters. When a seedling inside a shelter with a wasp nest gets up to within 3 - 4 inches of the nest, the wasps somehow prevent the tree from getting any taller. Wasps can cause a seedling to languish at the same height for months. Raccoons will also tear tree shelters apart to get at wasp nests in order to eat the wasp larvae. This not only destroys the tree shelter, but it exposes the young tree to damage from other animals. Wasp nests should not be tolerated. The easiest solution is to clap your hands hard, with the wasp nest, still inside the tree shelter, centered between your hands. This crushes the nest, the larvae, and the adult wasps instantly. I have done this hundreds of times over the years, and never once have I been chased, let alone stung, while doing this. On the other hand, if you have a deadly allergy to bee stings, you might want to have this job done by someone else.

While Japanese beetles do not normally do very serious damage to large chestnut trees, they can be absolutely deadly to young trees inside a tree shelter. Never let Japanese beetles get inside a tree shelter with a young chestnut. Once the tree grows out the top of the shelter and stops growing leaves inside, you don't need to worry about them as much. Japanese beetles can be excluded from shelters by using a barrier made of a fine plastic mesh. One good source of this is a product called a "body pouf" you can buy at Dollar General stores for \$1. When the ties that hold it together are cut, the "pouf" stretches out into a plastic mesh tube 10

- 12 feet long and 5 inches in diameter (see Figure 5). You can cut this tube into 12-inch lengths, tie a knot in one end, and slip it over the top of the tree shelter. It will need to be secured so it does not blow off in the wind. You should do this just before the beetles start to show up. The mesh will eventually deteriorate in the sun, but it will last long enough for the Japanese beetle season. An alternative to the beetle barrier is a repellent. Neem oil works well for this, but it must be applied before the beetles show up, and re-applied every two weeks or so, for the duration of the beetle season. Probably the fastest, easiest, and cheapest solution to the beetle problem is the use of an insecticide such as Sevin. A one-halfsecond squirt from a sprayer wand aimed down the top of the shelter is all it takes. For smaller trees, I insert the wand tip into one of the side punch-out holes to get the wand tip closer to the tree. A treatment of Sevin will last up the three weeks, but should be re-applied in the case of heavy rain.

Some cavity-nesting birds will fly down inside tree shelters, get trapped, and die. In Iowa it is usually bluebirds that do this, though I have seen phoebes and eastern wood peewees dead inside shelters. While a dead bluebird does provide some limited fertilizer value for the tree, it is not enough to compensate for the bad karma and PR. Tree shelters come with nets to place over the tops of the shelters to exclude bluebirds. When the top of a tree reaches within a few inches of the top of its shelter, the bluebird net needs to be removed. Otherwise, the top of the tree will become bent over as it tries to grow through the net.

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Figure 5. A body pouf from Dollar General and the pouf unraveled. Photos courtesy of Kathy Dice.



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Mice can be a serious problem in tree shelters. If you build up a high mouse population in a tree planting, some of the mice will find the tree shelters to be their favorite place to nest. On a cold, windy, snowy winter day, when they don't feel like going outside, the mice get bored and start chewing on the tree. The best way to prevent this is to keep your mouse population in check. If you keep the vegetation mowed short in between the trees, it leaves the mice open to predation from hawks, owls, foxes, coyotes, and house cats. The mouse population will remain low enough that it does not become an issue for tree survival. As an added precaution, you can drop a moth ball down inside each tree shelter. Mice will not nest next to a mothball.

While all of this might seem like a lot of maintenance to try to keep in mind, with a just a little practice you can trim the time needed to monitor each shelter down to just a few seconds per week. The added advantage in tree survival, growth, and nut production will be well worth the effort.

Cover Photo: A third-year tree in a tree shelter from Neal & Cynthia Nowacki's planting near Bloomfield, Iowa. This chestnut tree has had three growing seasons, and they are justifiably proud of how the chestnut trees are growing.



Figure 6. A tree growing out the top of a tree shelter. Photo courtesy of Tom Wahl & Kathy Dice.

CORNER

COOK'S

Fresh Walleye with Chestnuts and Shitake Mushrooms

Chef Herman Suhs, Hermann's European Cafe

Ingredients

10 oz. walleye fillets, deboned 1 oz. flour 2 oz. butter 1 oz. canola oil 3 oz. peeled chestnuts 1 oz. shitake mushrooms 1 oz. white wine 1/2 tsp. minced shallots salt pepper

chopped fresh parsley

fresh thyme

Directions

Cut 3 or 4 slits in skin of walleye. Dredge in flour.

Add oil and 1 oz. butter to skillet and saute fish, skin side up, until almost cooked through.

Turn fish over and add chestnuts, remaining butter, mushrooms, shallots, wine, and salt, pepper, parsley, and thyme to taste.

Saute a few more minutes until most of the liquid is absorbed.



Figure 7. Shelter netting. Photo courtesy of Neal & Cynthia Nowacki.

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healthy, unstressed, older trees because healthy trees produce resin to kill potential trunk invaders; however, young saplings produce less resin than mature trees and are vulnerable to attack.

Life Cycle

Females emerge in spring to find new hosts, boring a tunnel and one or more brood chambers in the sapwood or sometimes the heartwood of a tree. The brood chambers are where eggs are laid and larvae develop. Ambrosia beetles carry fungal spores on their bodies that they use to cultivate fungal "gardens" on the walls of the tunnels and chambers. Larvae and adults feed on the fungus growing on the gallery walls. Each gallery can contain up to 100 larvae. Temperate climates like that in Michigan can see up to two generations per year. Females may overwinter in galleries or in leaf litter near the base of trees.

Scouting

The black stem borer is an occasional pest that can mainly be found along orchard edges near adjacent wood lots. They are attracted to stressed trees. Stress conditions where this pest has been found have included drought, flooding, high density planting, winter damage, and topworked trees. When scouting for this pest, focus on young orchards, low areas, and trees in sandy soils.

To monitor for the pest, look for the signs of infestation described above within 1 meter (3 feet) of the ground. Trapping is also recommended to identify the beginning of flight in the spring. This can be done by creating a simple trap out of things around the farm/home to capture females (see Figure 3, next page). Cut two to four windows in the body of a plastic 1 or 2 liter bottle that has a cap. Hang it in the orchard upside down at a height of 0.5-1 meter (1.5-3 feet), near wooded areas or in low areas where trees are prone to cold injury and where there are trees with signs of infestation.

Bait the trap with ethanol using one of the following three methods:

- Squirt about a quarter cup of ethanolbased hand sanitizer (unscented) into the cap end (bottom) of your trap.
- With the bottle capped, pour in a cup of cheap vodka through one of the holes made in the side of the trap.



Figure 2. A. Painted chestnut trunk with black stem borer entry wound. B. Chestnut trunk with barb peeled away to reveal multiple borer wounds. C. Gallery with black stem borer larvae. D. Magnified image of black stem borer larvae, female abdomen and fungus. Photo credits: Erin Lizotte, MSU Extension.

• Purchase a ready-made ethanol lure to hang inside the trap and fill the bottom of the trap with soapy water.

If using hand sanitizer, traps must be checked daily because the sanitizer will form a crust on the surface after 24 hours. If using vodka or a purchased lure, traps should be checked at least once per week. Beetles are very tiny and require the use of a microscope and training to identify them correctly to species.

Management

Unlike other borers, trunk sprays of systemic insecticides will have very little

to no effect on black stem borer. This is because the insect does not feed on the tree itself. Instead it feeds on the fungus that it cultivates in its well protected galleries. The only potential time that an insecticide spray might have an impact is when females are emerging in the spring. Recent work at MSU has shown that one to two trunk sprays of a long lasting pyrethroid with the first spray timed at the beginning of flight in the spring has a significant effect on infestation rates of fruit trees. Repellent products currently in development have shown some promise as well. Chemical management of BSB is

Meet the Board: 2020 - 2021 CGA Board of Directors



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CHINESE CHESTNUT SEEDLINGS FOR SALE



The seed nuts were harvested last fall from two different trees in SE lowa and one tree in West Central Illinois, all three of which had a good crop. We cannot verify the genetics of these seedlings; however, we expect good production considering the parent trees produced well in a year when many trees with good genetics produced poorly. Using only the large or x-large nuts, we planted this spring in 4" x 4" x 9.5" tree pots; and they are ready to be put in the ground. Average height about 24".

Up to 100 trees: \$8 each; more than 100 trees: \$7 each. Pickup only, located near Burlington, IA

Contact: Jeff Allen

Email: valleychestnuts @gmail.com

Phone: 319-759-4202



Continued from page 7...

usually not recommended in chestnut, as it is a secondary pest of stressed trees that are likely to die from other factors. Trees that still seem healthy with a few borer holes in them might survive and may be treated for the pest using the scouting techniques outlined below to time the application of an insecticide.

Recent research suggests that the first flight of females in the spring typically occurs after the first two days with high temperatures above 68 degrees Fahrenheit (20 degrees Celsius). This usually corresponded with the accumulation of 75 growing degree days (GDD) base 50 F from January 1. Monitoring using ethanol traps like those described above are still the best tool for identifying the start of the flight and, therefore, timing of the first insecticide spray for black stem borer.

Later in the season, the best management strategy is to remove trees with extensive symptoms of decline (75% or more of the tree dead or dying) and burn them. It is also important to make sure all large prunings and brush piles are either flailed or burned. This is because both stressed trees and fresh cut, large-diameter prunings have been implicated as sources of new infestation.

This article was originally published by Michigan State University Extension. For more information, visit extension.msu.edu or contact Erin Lizotte at taylo548@msu. edu.



Figure 3. Example of a trap used to monitor for black stem borers. Photo credit: Amy Irish-Brown, MSU Extension.

COVID-19 Resources for Farmers

Compiled by the University of Missouri Center for Agroforestry

There has been a tremendous response to ensure that farmers are informed and supported during the coronavirus pandemic, including the following guides and resources:

Michael Fields Agricultural Institute's COVID-19 Resources for Farmers and Consumers

https://michaelfields.org/covid-19resources-for-farmers-and-consumers/

Farmers' Legal Action Group COVID-19 Guide: Navigating Relief for Farmers

http://www.flaginc.org/covid-19-guide/

USDA COVID-19 Federal Rural Resource Guide

https://www.rd.usda.gov/sites/default/ files/USDA_COVID-19_Fed_Rural_ Resource_Guide.pdf

ATTRA Sustainable Agriculture Program COVID-19 Response

https://attra.ncat.org/covid/

Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service COVID-19 Farmer Resources

https://mosesorganic.org/covid-farmerresources/ In addition, Michigan State University Extension has released the COVID-19 Hazard Assessment and Mitigation Program (CHAMP) e-tool to assist farms and businesses involved in agriculture with developing a written COVID-19 control plan. Even though the virtual training dates are over (more will likely come) the tool is available as is one-on-one assistance.

https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/ michigan-state-university-extensionreleases-covid-19-hazard-assessmentand-mitigation-program-champ-e-toolto-support-the-agriculture-industry



Building Connections Across the Chestnut Supply Chain: Online Workshop September 1 & 10

Register here: <u>https://bit.ly/ChestnutSupplyChain</u>

Many people are working to increase the production of chestnuts. People are also working to create relationships and infrastructure to aggregate, process, and distribute these chestnuts. Much of this work is happening in parallel.

These virtual events are an opportunity to have conversations with others involved in moving these efforts forward. This is intended as an advanced discussion of lessons learned and next steps. Since the 2020 Chestnut Growers of America meeting was postponed until 2021, we hope this event provides an interim opportunity to connect and build networks.

Who: Anyone involved in the chestnut supply chain or interested in supporting this work
What: Online discussion and networking session
When: Tuesday, September 1 from 9am-12pm eastern &
Thursday, September 10 from 9am to 12pm eastern

First discussion: Tuesday, September 1, 2020 – 9am-12pm eastern

- 9am-10am: Facilitated discussion by Erik Hagan with Greg Miller (Empire Chestnuts & Route 9 Chestnut Cooperative), Kathy Dice and Tom Wahl (Red Fern Farm), Bill Davidson (Savanna Institute), and Roger Blackwell (Chestnut Growers, Inc.)
- 10am-11am: Chestnut Aggregation Roundtable 5 minute introductions by 10 participants: *volunteer to share in the questionnaire!*
- 11am-12pm: Questions and Answers

Second discussion: Thursday, September 10, 2020 – 9am-12pm eastern

- Deeper discussions among those interested in moving forward in conversation about next steps to establish chestnut cooperatives and other aggregation organizations.
- Event will include both large group discussions and small group discussions organized by region and/or sector
- Please participate in the first event or listen to the recording to attend the second event.

To register, fill out this questionnaire about your work with chestnuts. We are using this questionnaire to develop the events so please fill it out to register and help us plan these events! <u>https://bit.ly/ChestnutSupplyChain</u>

If you have questions, please send questions to: Sara Fitzsimmons sara.fitzsimmons@acf.org d

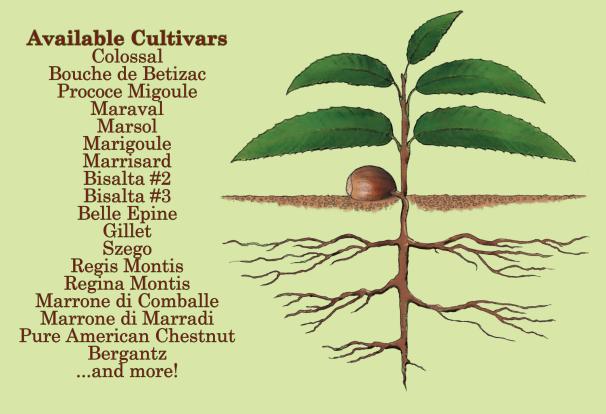
Support for this webinar series comes from the USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant ME# 44187246

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Summer 2020



High Rock Farm, NC

Chestnut Ridge of Pike County, IL