



2022 Annual Chestnut Market Survey Report: Highest Yields and Stable Prices

By Zhen Cai and Michael Gold, University of Missouri Center for Agroforestry

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The Annual Chestnut Market Survey was initiated by Chestnut Growers of America and the Center for Agroforestry at University of Missouri in 2010. The aim of this annual survey is to keep track of the growth of the chestnut industry over time and provide chestnut growers with information on the current and potential chestnut market. The 2022 Annual Chestnut Market Survey questionnaire was sent out to 118 current and past CGA members. In total, 51 useable surveys were collected with a response rate of 43%.

Production Operation

Survey respondents included: chestnut growers, sellers or value-added producers (84%), chestnut researchers/educators (4%), and others (12%). Nine respondents

were chestnut cooperatives members, including: Chestnut Growers, Inc. (4 respondents), RT 9 Co-op (2 respondents), and Prairie Grove Chestnut Growers (3 respondents). Survey responses came from 19 different states in the U.S. and one from Chile (Table 1, see page 3).

Approximately 40% of the chestnut orchards owned by our respondents are at least 10 years old. Respondents reported a total of 832 acres of land planted in chestnuts (this accounts for 20% of the total acres of the U.S. chestnuts orchards) (Table 2, see page 3). 238 acres are owned by co-op members.

In terms of chestnut orchard size, 55% of our respondents indicated that they

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THE CHESTNUT GROWER

Summer 2022

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.

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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 April 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 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.

Editorial Opinion

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Message from CGA President Roger Blackwell, Chestnut Grower



Hello Chestnut Growers of America!

Our meeting on August 7-10 in Reading, Pennsylvania was well attended. Chestnut Growers of America and the Northern Nut Growers Association jointly shared the 2022 Annual Conference.

Two days of presentations were devoted to talks about nut tree topics: Walnuts, Chestnuts, Hazelnuts, Pecans, and Paw paws. On the third day the group split up into two groups. One group visited Rutgers Horticulture Farm in East Brunswick, New Jersey with the focus on Hazelnuts, and the second group visited locations to view chestnut plantings in PA.

In this newsletter is the 2022 Annual Chestnut Market Survey Report by Zhen Cai and Michael Gold, University of Missouri Center for Agroforestry, which demonstrates that the commercial chestnut industry is growing. I also give a brief report on my observations of chestnut talks given during the Annual Meeting.

I encourage others in our organization to provide articles for future newsletters. We are all learning each year something new about growing chestnut trees in orchards. CGA wants to give a special thank you to Sara Fitzsimmons, CGA Vice President, who made this 2022 Annual Conference the most memorable experience. The meeting was our first in person meeting in three years, and we made this meeting a joint meeting with NNGA.

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 of 2022.

Best regards,



Roger

Observations on Chestnut Tree Presentations made at the CGA NNGA 2022 Annual Conference

By Roger Blackwell, CGA President

All the reports presented at the Conference were exceptionally good. Here are three presentations that I think are noteworthy to mention. (Notes are from the Presenters' descriptions of their talks).

Presentation by Jeanne Romero-Severson and Ron Revord, "Discovery of Interspecific Ancestry in Elite Chestnut Germplasm."

University scientists and Midwest chestnut growers, working together, are engaged in a participatory breeding program to identify and combine desirable attributes into an elite group of superior parents with known combining ability, while expanding the genetic base to increase stress resistance and minimize nut defects. A major objective is the generation of ancestry informative DNA fingerprints for every tree in the program. Interspecific ancestry is not always evident, but this ancestry may result in male sterile progeny, kernel quality defects, or outstanding performance. Ancestry-informative DNA markers can detect interspecific ancestry, unexpected inbreeding, unexpected parents, and other surprises, both pleasant and otherwise. Jeanne described the participatory breeding program, as implemented so far, and their DNA fingerprinting results to date.

Presentation by Bill Davison, "Chestnut Value Chain Development at the Savanna Institute."



Chestnut Value Chain Development is a high priority for the Commercialization Department at the Savanna Institute. This talk provided an overview of the research, demonstration, and on-farm projects that have been initiated with partners across the Midwest. Prioritization and goal setting for this work was guided by an Impact Investment Plan for the chestnut industry in the eastern United States that was published in 2021. Projects that will be covered include breeding cold-hardy chestnuts in the upper Midwest, seedling chestnut orchard establishment at Savanna Institute farms in Spring Green, WI, developing a robotic chestnut harvester, chestnut cultivar quality assessment,

market development for peeled and frozen chestnuts and chestnut flour, and development of a software application to facilitate simple crowd-sourced data from an on-farm network of chestnut growers.

Presentation by Julie Richards, "Using a GPS Locator in the Orchard."

This talk focused on Julie's work with Laserbird Labs this past fall, creating an interactive, digitized map of their chestnut orchards. They have integrated GPS technology to know exactly where they always are in the orchard and be able to easily check the history of all the surrounding trees using a handheld tablet and GPS antenna. This technology has a plethora of applications ranging from orchard mapping and data collection to precision planting.

The talks presented over two days have given us many positive things to consider in how the chestnut industry is moving toward the future.

Next year, we plan to do a joint meeting again with NNGA, CGA, and the Walnut Council on **July 23-26, 2023, in Columbia, Missouri**. The meeting will feature joint and concurrent technical sessions, all-day field tour to the Horticulture and Agroforestry Research Center, and both a Sunday evening reception and Banquet with a social to allow members to mingle and share ideas on growing hardwood for quality timber and nuts. 🍂

Mark Your Calendars!

For the 2023 Annual Meeting, a joint meeting with the Northern Nut Growers Association (NNGA) and the Walnut Council. More details coming soon!

July 23-26, 2023

Columbia, Missouri

2022 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.

Continued from page 1...

have less than 10 acres of chestnuts planted (Figure 1). Approximately 45% of respondents had plans to expand their orchards in the future (Table 3).

Most of our respondents (76%) grew chestnuts using conventional methods, while 24% use some form of organic production (but often not officially certified as USDA Organic). Of those respondents who used conventional methods, 72% used inorganic fertilizer, 62% used insecticide and 62% used herbicide.

Harvest and Yield

A total of 367,422 pounds of chestnuts were reported in the 2021 harvest by our respondents, and the total pounds harvested by all CGA members would represent a larger number if all members responded to the survey. Almost the entire reported chestnut harvest (98%) came from orchards that were at least 10 years old.

Approximately 33% of the respondents harvested at least 10,000 pounds of chestnuts in 2021 (Figure 2). Almost half of our respondents (47%) picked up their chestnuts by hand, 32% indicated they used nut wizards to harvest chestnuts, and 13% indicated they used a commercial chestnut harvester or other mechanical harvester. Only 11% of respondents reported their yields were lower compared to the previous reporting year, 14% reported no change in yield, 75% reported higher yields. Increased yields were reported due to maturation of orchards and/or good weather. Lower yields were attributed to bad weather conditions.

Table 2. Total acres planted in chestnuts.

	2021-2022	2020-2021	2018-2019	2017-2018
Total acres planted in chestnuts	832 ac	703 ac	824 ac	663 ac

Table 3. Respondents' plans for orchard expansion.

	2021-2022	2020-2021	2018-2019
Yes	45%	43%	40%
No	55%	57%	60%
New Acres	59	220	236
New Trees	3753	4,728	10,740

Table 1. Locations of chestnut orchards owned by the 2022 survey respondents.

State	# of Orchards	State	# of Orchards
IA	5	VA	2
IL	6	OR	1
MI	3	WA	1
NC	2	FL	1
MO	2	TN	1
SC	2	ME	1
MS	1	DE	1
NY	3	AR	1
OH	2	TX	1
PA	2	Chile	1
		Total	39

Marketing

Value added chestnut products producers only accounted for 4% of the respondents. The majority of respondents (66%) produced and marketed chestnuts by themselves, and 7% marketed all their chestnuts through a grower Co-op (Figure 3).

Income from Chestnuts

In 2021, annual gross sales income from chestnuts greater than \$50,000 were reported by 16% of respondents and annual gross sales exceeding \$100,000 were reported by 12% of respondents (excluding shipping and delivery) (Figure 4). The majority of respondents, 52%, reported annual gross sales less than \$5,000. Only 12% of the respondents reported earning income from the sale of value-added products.

Market Outlets and Prices

Growers sell fresh chestnuts and value-added products through a variety of

different outlets (Figure 5) including: marketing cooperatives, farmers markets, restaurants/chefs, distributor/broker, grocery store, wholesaler, online, and on farm sales. Compared to last year's survey results, the percentage of respondents who marketed their chestnuts through cooperative, distributor/broker, and through Farmers Market increased in 2021. The percentage of respondents who marketed their products through on farm sales, wholesale, grocery store, and health and natural food stores decreased.

Table 4 provides a year-to-year comparison of reported chestnut prices at different market outlets from 2016 to 2021. Overall, prices are holding steady or increasing from 2016-2021.

Demand for Fresh Chestnuts and Value-added Products - A Healthy Trend

In 2021, increased demand for fresh chestnuts was reported by 70% of respondents, which is similar to the responses from the previous year. In terms of supply and demand in current market, 53% of respondents indicated demand exceeded supply compared to 3% reporting demand below supply.

Respondents were also asked to comment on the demand for value-added chestnut products. Only 7 responses were collected, with 43% of them (N=3) reporting a strong demand for value-added chestnut products, and 14% reporting a weak demand (N=1). These responses reflect the overall lack of value-added sales reported in 2021.

Information on Chestnut Cooperatives

This year's chestnut cooperative survey collected information from three chestnut cooperatives. On average, each cooperative has 39 members. Cooperatives reported an average of 92,487 pounds of chestnuts per cooperative were sold in 2021. Most chestnuts were sold in Illinois, Georgia, Texas, Michigan, Iowa, Massachusetts, and New Jersey. None of the chestnuts sold by cooperatives are organic. Chestnuts sold by cooperatives reported retail prices from \$2.00 - \$9.00/lb., and wholesale prices from \$3.50 - \$4.50/lb. Outlets for coop chestnuts included: distributor/broker (\$3.50/lb.), grocery (\$4.50/lb.), and online consumers (\$4.25 - \$9.00/lb.).

Conclusion

Chestnut production in 2021 almost tripled compared to the production in

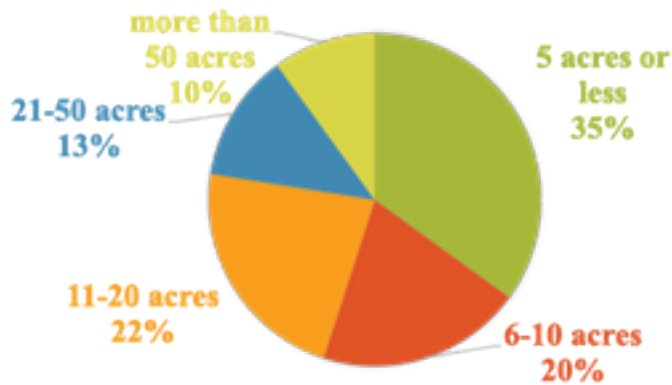


Figure 1. Sizes of chestnut orchards owned by the 2022 survey respondents (N=40).

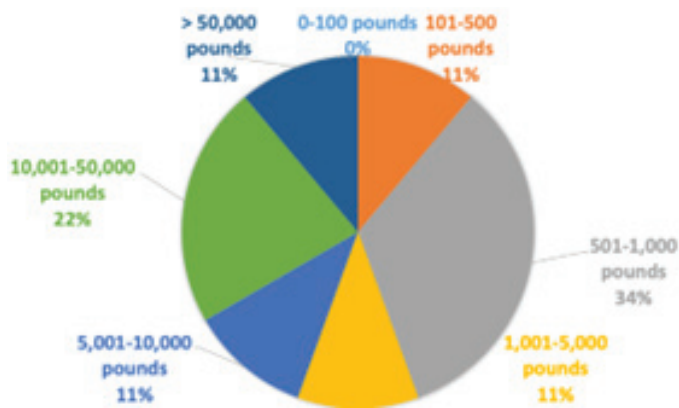


Figure 2. Number of pounds of chestnuts harvested by respondents in 2021 (N=28).

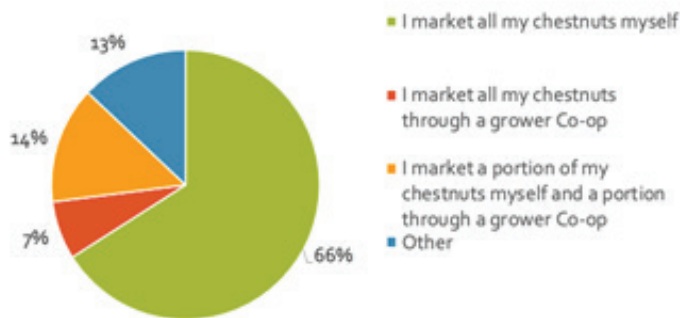


Figure 3. How respondents marketed their chestnuts in 2021 (N=29).

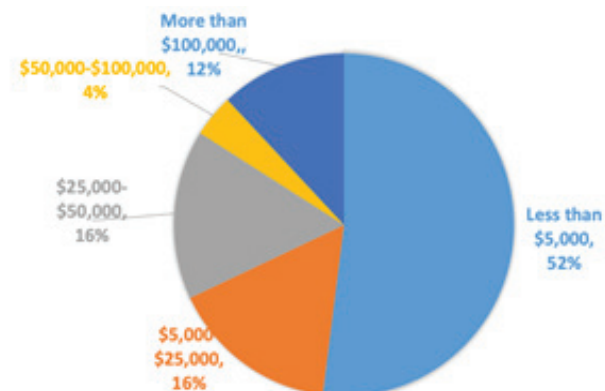


Figure 4. Approximate annual gross sales income from chestnuts in 2021 - excluding shipping and delivery (N=25).

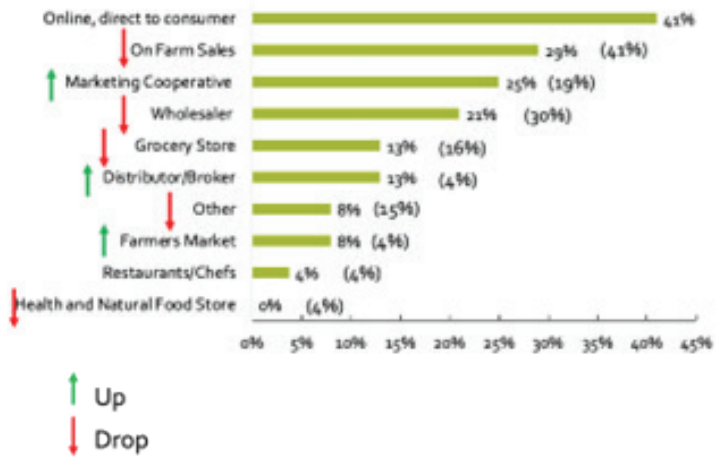


Figure 5. Market outlets for fresh chestnuts and value-added products (numbers in parenthesis are data from the previous survey) (N=24).

Table 4. Chestnut prices at different market outlets.

Outlet	Price Range			
	2021-2022	2020-2021	2018-2019	2017-2018
Marketing cooperative	\$2.25-\$4.15	\$2.50-\$3.50	\$1.60-\$2.80	\$1.50-\$4.50
Farmers market	\$6.00	\$6.00-\$7.00	\$2.00-\$6.75	\$4.00-\$6.00
Restaurants/chefs	\$4.00	No Info	\$3.50-\$5.50	\$3.50
Distributor/Broker	\$3.50-\$4.60	No Info	\$2.85-\$5.50	\$3.50-\$4.10
Health and natural food store	No Info	\$4.60	\$4.00-\$4.60	\$2.25-\$5.75
Grocery store	\$3.50	\$3.00-\$6.00	\$3.10-\$6.00	\$3.25-\$4.10
Wholesaler	\$3.10-\$5.00	\$2.50-\$5.25	\$2.00-\$7.00	\$3.50-\$4.00
Online, direct to consumer	\$5.00 - \$8.18	\$4.25 - \$10.00	\$5.00-\$6.75	\$5.50-\$8.00
On farm sales	\$4.00-\$8.00	No Info	\$1.00-\$6.50	\$2.00-\$8.00

2020 due to good weather. Almost half of chestnut orchards are of pre-commercial age. Co-op members tend to have more mature orchards compared to non-co-op members. Some growers started to harvest chestnuts using commercial harvesters, however, a majority of growers harvested chestnuts by hand or using nut wizard. More growers marketed their products using marketing cooperatives, and none of them sold their products to health and natural food store in 2021. Over the years, chestnut prices have remained stable and strong. Surprisingly, in 2021, although the inflation was high, there was no significant increase in chestnut prices. Most growers are optimistic about the current chestnut market demand. Many growers are still planning to expand their chestnut orchards. 🍅

Scenes from the 2022 Annual Meeting

Photos and captions provided by Sara Fitzsimmons



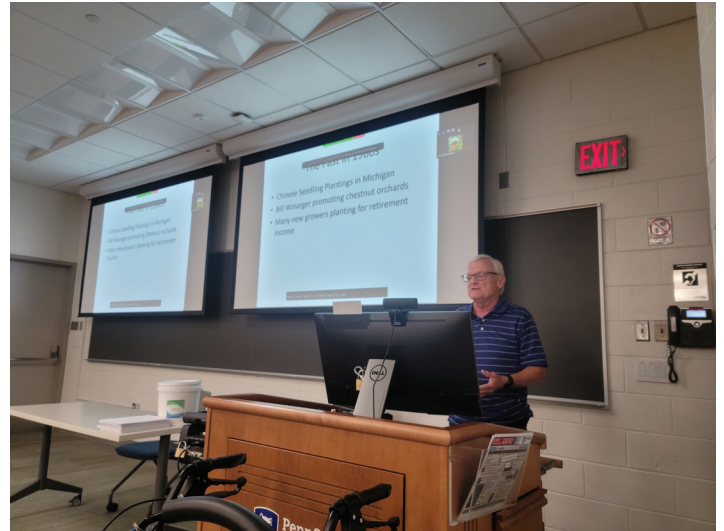
Amy Miller introduces speaker Emelie Swackhamer, the first speaker of the joint CGA NNGA 2022 Meeting.



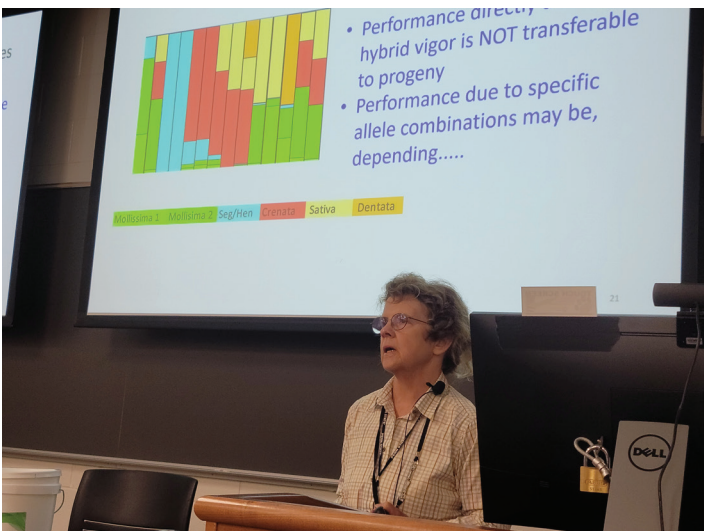
Trees on display in preparation for the live auction.



Monday morning audience prepares to hear talks following NNGA business meeting.



Roger Blackwell, CGA President, presents "Chestnut Growers, Inc, the Michigan Cooperative" during the Monday technical sessions.



Jeanne Romero-Severson, University of Notre Dame, presents "Discovery of Interspecific Ancestry in Elite Chestnut Germplasm" during the Monday technical sessions.



NNGA president and CGA Board Member Greg Miller prepares audience for the live auction.



Jerry Henkin prepares to lead the banquet audience in a new song he wrote featuring Drs. Sandy Anagnostakis and Jeanne Romero-Severson.



Rick and Jen Hartlieb welcome the tour audience to their farm, Castanea Farms, Inc, and introduce the logistics of their operations.



At the tour of his farm, Rick Hartlieb shows the audience his chestnut processing area, where harvested chestnuts are brought to be heat-treated, sized, and bagged for sale.



Wrapping up the tour at Castanea Farms, Stephen Hoy of Penn State and TACF describes the build and function of a mobile chestnut processing unit he built as part of a SARE grant in 2020-2021.



*Tour goes enjoy a lunch stop at the Louise K. Moore County Park. Following lunch, Louise Bugbee introduced and led an informal tour of the grafted nut and fruit trees derived from the John Hershey collection in Downingtown, PA.**



The group tours an American chestnut "Germplasm Conservation Orchard" planted at the Louise K. Moore Park.

**Not shown are the antique nut crackers and nuts which were available to trial and eat, made possible by volunteers from the local Master Gardeners group.*

Meet the Board

Meet the 2022-2023 CGA Board of Directors:



Roger Blackwell,
President
New Era Chestnuts, LLC
Milford, Michigan



Sara Fitzsimmons,
Vice President
Penn State University
University Park, Pennsylvania



Jack Kirk,
Secretary/Treasurer
Rocky Creek Chestnut Farm
Richmond, Virginia



Steve Jones
Colossal Orchards Inc.
Selah, Washington



Greg Miller
Empire Chestnut Company
Carrollton, Ohio



Tom Wahl
Red Fern Farm
Wapello, Iowa



Luke Wilson
Wil-Ker-Son Ranch
Gridley, California

Upcoming Chestnut Events



16th Annual Missouri Chestnut Roast Festival

Saturday, October 1st, 10am to 3pm | MU Horticulture & Agroforestry Research Farm
10 Research Center Rd, New Franklin, MO 65274

The Missouri Chestnut Roast Festival is the Center for Agroforestry's signature annual field event at the MU Horticulture and Agroforestry Research Farm in New Franklin, Missouri. Visitors have the opportunity to learn about agroforestry through tours of on-farm research plots and demonstration areas, presentations from local producers and researchers, and interactions with specialty perennial crop vendors, conservation and forestry organizations, and other educational exhibits. This event is free and open to the public.

More information at centerforagroforestry.org/missouri-chestnut-roast-festival.



Chestnut Improvement Network Website Now Live

The official website for the [Chestnut Improvement Network](#) launched this month serves as a platform to connect potential chestnut growing partners with university researchers.

After decades of cultivar trials in test orchards, seed dissemination, and local/regional selection efforts, chestnuts are ready to take a big leap towards becoming more regionally adapted and rooted in productive agroforestry systems across their range. However, to ensure viability across diverse growing regions, the footprint of breeding research must expand to include multiple environments and growing conditions.

The Chestnut Improvement Network (CIN) is a collection of researchers, nurseries, and growers advancing chestnut genetics for orchard nut-production. Conventional breeding programs centralize the process at institutions; conversely, the CIN takes the breeding process on-farm with an expanding network of participating growers planting pedigreed-seedling families. These on-farm evaluations allow breeding for multiple target environments and incorporate grower insight and feedback into selection criteria. The CIN is a

collaboration between the [University of Missouri Center for Agroforestry's nut breeding program](#), [Mountain Gentry Nursery](#), and [participating members](#).

There are three membership options for those wishing to participate in the Chestnut Improvement Network:

Donating Members

Donating members contribute plant materials (scion, pollen) to the network from on-farm selections that demonstrate breeding value through observation and evaluation. Breeding value implies that selections hold traits of interest and express them in the program's target environments. Donating members may maintain ownership of their plant materials, but they permit their use in breeding for CIN.

Breeding Members

Breeding members purchase and cultivate full-sibling families and/or curated open pollinated families. These breeding populations must be composed of at least 250 individuals from the CIN breeding material. Breeding members participate, based on their interests, with CIN research staff to evaluate and make field selections from these families.

Supporting Members

Supporting Members are chestnut growers and enthusiasts that may not have existing trees to donate or orchards large enough for systematic breeding but would like to participate and engage with the network. Supporting members may purchase and grow smaller quantities of CIN plant material and engage with the CIN community in Q&A, the member forum (nuts and bolts), and public forum (broad grower engagement and extension platform).

If you are interested in participating in the Chestnut Improvement Network, please visit the website for information on membership and how the breeding program operates. Additionally, the website has grower resources such as information on the University of Missouri's chestnut cultivar collection, grafted vs. seedling orchards, and orchard establishment and management recommendations.

Visit chestnutimprovementnetwork.com to learn more. Please send all inquiries to CIN@missouri.edu.



Chestnut Growers of America Flyers Available Upon Request

CGA has developed a flyer for our organization that nursery owners can hand out to customers or include with orders. All members are welcome and encouraged to use the flyer as well.

The flyer can be downloaded and printed from the members-only page of the CGA website. CGA will also print flyers and ship them to you at no cost.

To request flyers, email Rita at chestnutgrowersofamerica@gmail.com and include the number of flyers you are requesting and confirm your mailing address.

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Contact Ray Young
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 Battle Ground, WA



NNGA CGA 2022 Joint Meeting Presentation Recordings

From Sara Fitzsimmons: Many thanks to you all for supporting our 2022 joint conference of the Northern Nut Growers Association and Chestnut Growers of America! The event was a great success both because of the hard work of all the organizers as well as those of you who came to join us, both in person and virtually. If you missed it, a playlist of all the presentations from meeting can be found here: psu.mediaspace.kaltura.com/playlist/dedicated/1_pe5gwwzs

Monday, August 8 Chestnut Highlights:

- #8: Roger Blackwell, Chestnut Growers, Inc, the Michigan Cooperative
- #10: Jeanne Romero-Severson, Discovery of Interspecific Ancestry in Elite Chestnut Germplasm
- #16: Peter Haarmann, Protecting Young Seedlings from Small Mammals
- #17: Erik Carlson, Advancement in Chestnut Genetics and Biotechnology at SUNY-ESF
- #18: Paul Sisco, Self-Sterility in Chinese Chestnut

Tuesday, August 9 Chestnut Highlights:

- #23: Bill Davison, Chestnut Value Chain Development at the Savanna Institute
- #24: Julie Richards, Using a GPS Locator in the Nut Orchard
- #29: Allie Watson, Chestnut Brown Rot
- #30: Amy Miller, Chestnut Anthracnose (formerly known as Blossom End Rot)
- #33: Charles NovoGradac, Herbicide Damage to Chestnut Trees



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THE CHESTNUT GROWER

Summer 2022

Chinese Chestnuts Proudly Grown by Family Farmers in America's Heartland!

Prairie Grove Chestnut Growers is an association of over 60 chestnut growers from Iowa, Illinois, and Missouri!

Harvest



Our Chinese Chestnuts are harvested and brought in fresh by our growers

Cleaned + Sorted



Next, our chestnuts are cleaned, sorted by size, bagged, and refrigerated to maintain peak freshness and flavor.

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