



Product Review: Inexpensive imported chestnut peeler gets the job done well, but has some drawbacks

By Chris Kresa, Dungeness Chestnuts, Sequim, Washington

In This Issue

- 1 Chestnut Peeler Review
by Chris Kresa
- 2 President's Message
Roger Blackwell
- 3 Chestnut Growers, Inc. Processing
Operation
by Roger Blackwell
- 8 CGA Membership & Financial Reports
by Jack Kirk
- 9 2021 Membership Renewal

Please note: We are providing this review solely for the benefit of chestnut growers. We did not receive any reimbursement for this review.

A couple years ago, Dungeness Chestnuts purchased a chestnut peeler imported from China. After researching ways to automate shelling chestnuts in a cost-effective and efficient way and reviewing numerous hand-held and mechanical devices, we decided on a \$350 unit purchased on Amazon. The description was poorly written and not easy to understand, but after seeing the photos of piles of perfectly peeled chestnuts, we were sold. Hey, what could go wrong? As it turns out, not too much; this machine runs like a champ.

Setup

The peeler arrived in a large wooden box with all instructions in Chinese. Fortunately, it was simple to figure out and easy to use.

Operation

Plug it in, push the start switch and wait a few seconds for it to come up to speed, then drop the nuts into the hopper. Six blades are positioned horizontally on a rotating plate to abrade the shell and pellicle from the nuts, and most debris is blown out through the discharge chute. Knowing when to remove the nuts takes some practice, but the process takes about 30-45 seconds. Chestnuts can be removed at any time without stopping the machine and any nuts that are not

Continued on page 4...

THE CHESTNUT GROWER

Winter 2021

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.

Board of Directors

<i>President</i>	Roger Blackwell Milford, MI	(810) 923-2954 rblackwel@comcast.net
<i>Vice President</i>	Derek Waltchack Birmingham, AL	(205) 223-2607 dwt@shanwait.com
<i>Secretary/Treasurer</i>	Jack Kirk Richmond, VA	(804) 357-1137 jackschestnuts@gmail.com
<i>Director</i>	Steve Jones Selah, WA	(509) 697-4160
<i>Director</i>	Greg Miller Carrollton, OH	(330) 627-3181
<i>Director</i>	Tom Wahl Wapello, IA	(319) 729-5905
<i>Director</i>	Luke Wilson Gridley, CA	(530) 370-5533

Committees

<i>Editor/Webmaster</i>	Rita Blythe	chestnutgrowersofamerica@gmail.com
-------------------------	-------------	--

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, camera ready	\$20.00
Half page, camera ready	\$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.

Deadlines

<i>Issue</i>	<i>Deadline</i>	<i>Mailed</i>
Winter	Dec. 20	January
Spring	Mar. 20	April
Summer	June 20	July
Fall	Sept. 20	October

Editorial Opinion

The views, articles and advertising appearing in *The Chestnut Grower* do not necessarily reflect the attitude nor policy of Chestnut Growers of America, Inc., its members, officers, Board of Directors, or Editor. Chestnut Growers of America, Inc., and this publication are not responsible for errors and/or misrepresentations in advertising. The Editor reserves the right to reject or edit all material submitted for publication.

© 2021. Original articles may be reprinted with written permission of the author and this publication.

Message from CGA President Roger Blackwell, Chestnut Grower



Happy New Year 2021 Chestnut Growers of America Members. I hope you all had a good holiday season and stayed healthy and safe.

Due to Covid-19, we will not have an in person annual meeting this year. Our plans will be to

schedule webinar meetings in the latter part of May and the beginning of June 2021. Sara Fitzsimmons of the American Chestnut Foundation in Pennsylvania and her committee will be working to coordinate these sessions. They will be offered both live and recorded for access to see the sessions at the convenience of CGA members. We hope to have three to five sessions that will be interesting to all members. Each session will not be longer than 90 minutes. Complete details will be found in the Spring newsletter. We will be getting additional information out to all our members via email in the next couple of months.

This newsletter has some great articles. I present a summary of the CGI Processing Operation here in Michigan. Chris Kresa shares a review of an inexpensive chestnut peeler from China. In addition, Jack Kirk, CGA Treasurer, has compiled our annual financial summary and membership report. Information for renewing your CGA membership for 2021 is included as well.

Please remember the purpose of CGA is to promote chestnuts, to share information among 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. Thank you all for your contributions to CGA.

See you on a CGA Webinar soon. Hopefully, we can meet in person again in 2022 after the pandemic is under control.

Best regards,



Roger

Chestnut Growers, Inc. Processing Fresh Chestnuts for the Marketplace

By Roger Blackwell, CGA President & Chestnut Grower, Milford, Michigan

Chestnut Growers, Inc. (CGI) has developed a significant market for fresh chestnuts over the last 19 years. The receiving operation has a standard operating plan we follow to efficiently process and make productivity gains in packaging fresh quality chestnuts for our markets. The business of the Co-op currently has 33 members and is continuing to grow with the anticipation of new growers joining.

We have made changes to the configuration of the line layout, resulting in a better configuration that will be reducing the number of sizes/grades from the Kerian sizer. The current equipment can now handle an expanding crop, with the ability to process 350,000+ pounds in a one-month post-harvest timeframe to allow the marketing of the bulk of the crop at maximum value in the fall (October-December) as quality fresh chestnuts.

The following operating process is described below for the four-month period of operation.

Mid-September

Middle of September each year for the harvest of Chestnuts:

- Operational setup of equipment and cleaning all equipment and walk-in refrigeration coolers must be sanitized. Corey Allen, Receiving Operation Manager for CGI, will complete these tasks.
- Setup of table for record keeping of each grower's chestnut crop received in pounds. Using laptop computer for record keeping and accounting of pounds received. Receipt book is maintained for each grower's individual pounds received.
- Pallet bins must be labeled, and individual identification numbers

are used to meet verification of each grower's chestnuts. With this process we follow the accountability of each grower's chestnuts through to the customer who buys the chestnuts at the retail level.

Last Week of September

Starting to receive chestnuts from CGI member growers to be weighed in and accepted for processing. Receipt is given for pounds delivered to Clarksville. Pre-cleaning process will start with individual grower's chestnuts and processed in the following steps:

1. Pre-Clean (pounds per day) ideally would be matched to 3,000 to 3,500 pounds per hour sizing rate of Kerian Sizer.
2. Convey inside to Hopper metered to 3,000/3,500 pounds per hour.
3. Green machine is the cold-water

Continued on page 6...

Happy New Year!

Your 2021 membership dues are now due. You have two options:

Renew Online

Download a fillable form from the CGA website at www.chestnutgrowers.org/CGA_Membership_Application_fillable.pdf. If you receive the e-version of the newsletter, the form is also attached to that email. Complete the form and email it to Jack Kirk, CGA secretary/treasurer, at jackschestnuts@gmail.com. You can then pay your dues through the CGA website by visiting www.chestnutgrowers.org/paydues.html. Please make sure you submit both your renewal application and payment at the same time! ~OR~

Renew by Mail

Fill out, detach, and return the membership renewal form included with this issue on page 9. Send the form with a check made payable to Chestnut Growers of America, Inc. to Jack Kirk, 2300 Bryan Park Ave., Richmond, VA 23228.

Renew Today - A \$10 late fee is applied to renewals submitted after April 1. If you are a new member who joined after August 1, 2020, your dues are already paid for 2020, so no action is needed at this time.

Give your marketing a boost with a paid CGA Grower Directory listing

The online Grower Directory (www.chestnutgrowers.org/growers.html) provides a way for potential customers to look up chestnut growers in their area. An option to post a paid listing helps your orchard stand out with a photo and more detailed information. From the listing, customers can link directly to your website or contact you via email. Your renewal form includes the option for you to select a paid listing (still \$25.00/year) or a free listing. CGA regularly directs outside inquiries about local chestnuts to the online directory, so this is a marketing opportunity you can't afford to miss!

Continued from Page 1...

completely peeled can be tossed back into the chamber for further processing. This machine is designed for *Mollissima*, so larger nuts, (i.e., *Colossal* and *Bouche de Betizac*) will occasionally become stuck in the discharge chute and will need to be pushed out. We only run chestnuts through the peeler that have been disinfected and rinsed.

Cleanup

This peeler is not easy to clean. We found that the best way to clean it is to remove all shrouds and use a soft wire brush on the blades and plate after it has had a while to dry in a well-ventilated area. Trying to clean immediately after use just smears the material around. Also, keeping it closed up after use can cause debris to mold in the chamber. After brushing, we use a leaf blower to remove remaining debris and then wipe down the entire chamber with a clean, damp cloth. The peeler is most efficient when used to peel large amounts of chestnuts at one time rather than a pound here and there.

Wear and Tear

A reviewer on Amazon was concerned that paint chipping inside the chamber could contaminate the nuts, but we have not seen this occur. After a couple of seasons of use only minor abrasion near the blades has been observed. If a rock or other debris were to enter the chamber however, it could cause real damage, and for this reason we hand-sort everything that goes into the peeler.

Chestnut Storage

Once the chestnuts are peeled, they become highly perishable and must be frozen within 24 hours or they begin to mold. After peeling, we immediately rinse and remove any remaining debris by hand, then lay them on a parchment paper lined baking sheet and quick freeze the nuts for about an hour. After freezing, the nuts are vacuum sealed in one-pound bags. Vacuum sealed chestnuts keep well for at least 12 months in the freezer. We have also had success with drying these kernels on trays over the wood stove for about 48 hours.

Summary

This peeler would benefit from having an air leg or vacuum system added to remove all debris from the nuts at discharge; removing debris mixed in with the peeled



Figure 1. The mechanical chestnut peeler from China.



Figure 2. The peeling chamber on the unit.

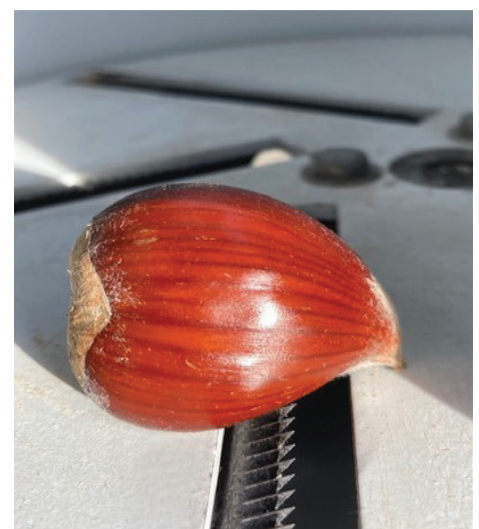


Figure 3. The blades on the chestnut peeler.

chestnuts adds extra labor. Also, having the nuts pass over water jets or similar cleaning would loosen any remaining debris prior to packaging.

After using chestnuts peeled in this machine, the thought of having to score, roast and shell before use seems like a laborious chore. Having chestnuts available that are ready to use makes cooking with peeled chestnuts so much easier and less time consuming. Also, restaurant owners and consumers appreciate the time savings and convenience of using ready-peeled chestnuts and are willing to pay a premium for this product.

Whether you choose this machine or another like it, we believe the chestnut industry is ready for “ready-to-use”. 🍅



Figure 4. Chestnut peelings can be fed to livestock.



Figure 5. Some peeling debris remains after shelling and must be removed from final product.

Chestnut Peeler Pros & Cons

Pros

- Peels approximately 1 lb. of chestnuts every 30-45 seconds
- Transforms small, split, unmarketable chestnuts into value-added \$*
- Removes 100% of shells and 95% of pellicle
- Reduces labor costs
- Easy to use
- Uses common 110V current
- Fairly inexpensive investment for a small operation and could work well in a co-op situation

**2 lbs. of small in-shell chestnuts equals approximately 1 lb. of mechanically shelled chestnuts at \$16.50/lb. for a shelled, frozen and vacuum-sealed product.*

Larger nuts have a higher nut-to-shell ratio. Bouche de Betizac is our largest chestnut and has the highest yield at about 1-1/4 lbs. shelled per 2 pounds of in-shell.

Cons

- Fit and finish of unit is subpar by US standards.
- Reliability of unit and replacement part availability is unknown.
- All instructions are solely in Chinese.
- Unit is loud and messy to use.
- Unit is not easy to clean.
- Does not remove pellicle from concave surfaces or invaginations; some post-processing of peeled chestnuts by hand is required.
- Peeled chestnuts are highly perishable and must be frozen within 24 hours or dried.
- Overloading unit with more than one pound of chestnuts at a time causes it to shut down, and all material in chamber must be removed prior to restart.
- Larger nuts can become lodged in the discharge chute and must be removed.

Continued from page 3...

float tank and sanitizer (Sanidate Solution) to clean chestnuts.

4. Kerian Speed Sizer completes the task of grading the chestnuts into four sizing pallet bins.
5. All bins are weighed and identified with grower identification numbers. Each bin weight is recorded to the individual grower for accounting. Growers are paid on the size of their chestnuts. Accountability must be maintained throughout the process.
6. All bins with chestnuts are treated again with Sanidate by putting the pallet bin in a tank of Sanidate solution for final sanitizing to eliminate mold and bacteria for the fresh market consumer.
7. Bins of chestnuts are placed in refrigeration of 32–34-degree Fahrenheit and kept for just-in-time bagging individual buyer orders for the fresh market deliveries.

Last week of October through December

During the last week of October and the months of November and December are packing days to meet weekly orders for the fresh chestnut markets:

- Packing line Hopper 2,000 pounds per hour starting for orders for the last week of October.
- Inspection belt needs one to two people to view all chestnuts prior to being bagged in twenty-five-pound bags at the bag filler station.

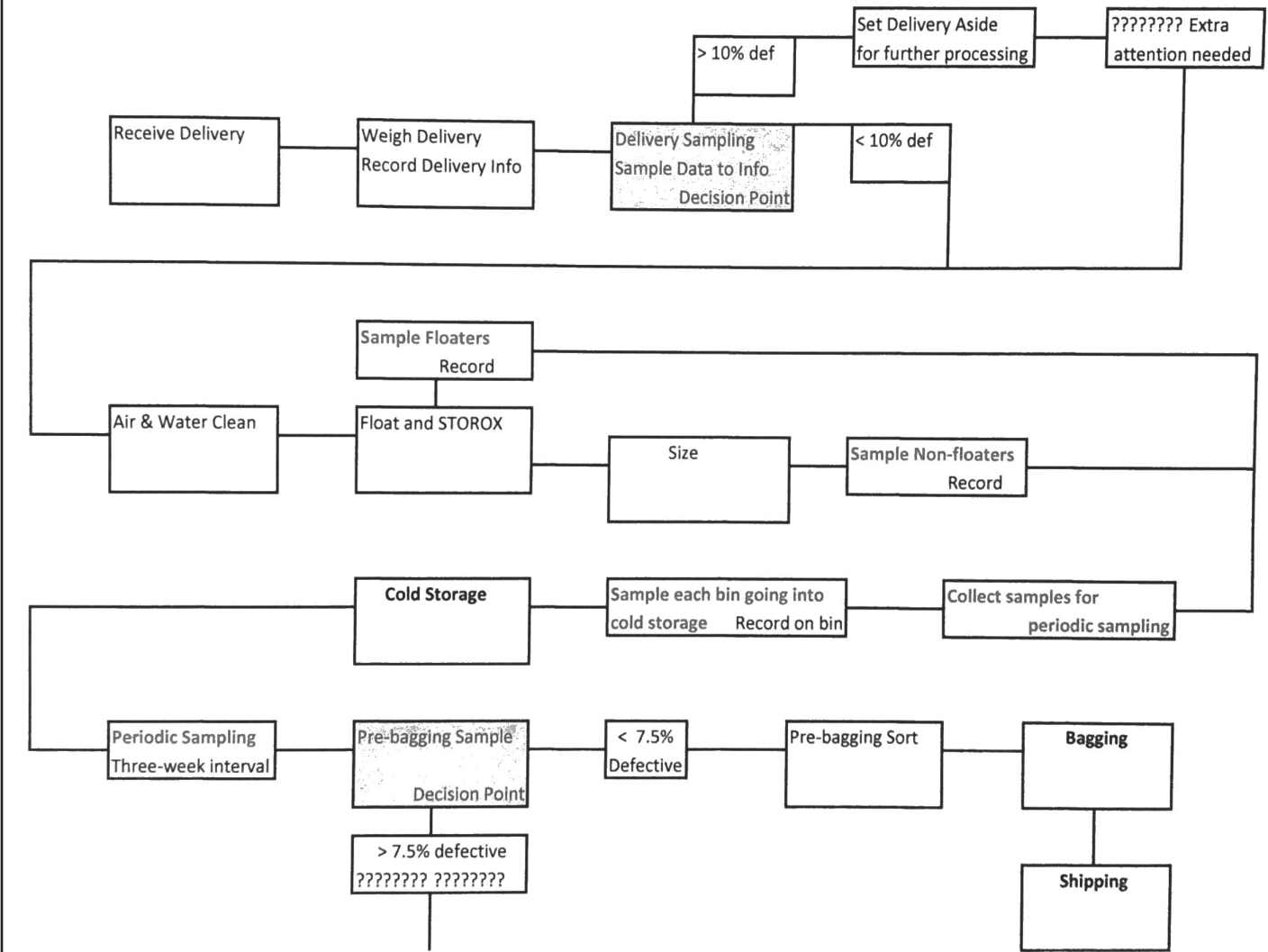
These processes prepare for the final bagging or packaging of the chestnuts for fresh market. CGI currently has packaging for both 25-pound bags and one-pound bags to ship to retail markets. We are continuing to make improvements in these two processes as volumes increase in the future.

Chestnut Growers, Inc. is striving to build the commercial chestnut industry for the future. 🍂

- ▶ 1. Dirty chestnuts entering the spray wash for cleaning
2. Chestnuts after pre-cleaning
3. Chestnuts after sizing entering the bin



Chestnut Processing Flow Chart



Dumping grower chestnuts into processing operations.

Renew Your CGA Membership for 2021

Please complete the form on the following page to renew your CGA membership for 2021. Alternatively, you can download a fillable PDF from the CGA website (or attached to email newsletter mailing) and pay your dues online via PayPal (see instructions at top of form).

Remember, a \$10 late fee is implemented for members renewing after April 1. If you do not renew and pay dues by the conclusion of the annual meeting in June, you will be removed from the newsletter mailing list, the email list, the website grower directory, and the members-only website access. You will receive a series of reminders to renew prior to these deadlines. If you plan to renew, please do so promptly. Thank you!

Roasted Rosemary Chestnuts

Thanks to Chris Kresa for sharing this recipe perfect for using chestnuts peeled using the chestnut peeling machine he reviewed on page 1.

Ingredients

- 1 c raw shelled chestnuts, thawed (if frozen, thaw for ½ hour before roasting)
- 1 Tbsp butter
- 2 sprigs rosemary
- 3 sage leaves
- Pinch of nutmeg
- 1/8 tsp black pepper

Preheat oven to 375°F

Pile chestnuts in the middle of a 12 x14 inch piece of foil. Lay butter, rosemary, and sage leaves on top. Sprinkle with seasonings.

Draw up corners of foil to form a chestnut shape, leaving a small opening at the top to vent.

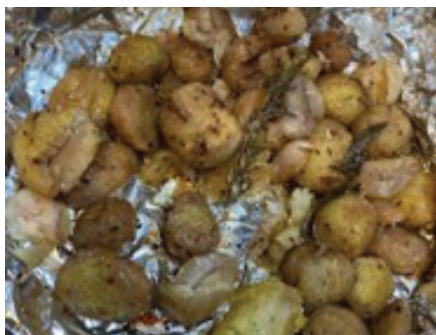
Place on a cookie sheet and roast for 35-45 minutes or until chestnuts are soft when pierced with a fork.

Serve warm as an appetizer or use in any recipe that includes roasted chestnuts.



Membership Report, 2017-2020

Members	2020	2019	2018	2017
Household	57	55	58	61
Individual	48	42	54	46
Associate	1	5	3	1
Honorary	0	0	0	0
Complimentary	1	2	2	3
Total	107	104	117	111



Chestnut Growers of America End-of year Financial Report, 2017-2020

Summaries prepared by Jack Kirk, CGA
Treasurer / Secretary.

		2020	2019	2018	2017
Income	Annual Mtg Registrations	--	14,428.58	2,355.00	4,486.59
	Annual Mtg Silent Auction	--	234.00	215.00	282.00
	Membership Dues	5,245.00	3,978.38	4,876.22	4,595.65
	Online Grower Directory	350.00	140.00	380.00	125.00
	Interest Income	155.72	64.82	58.09	66.73
	Newsletter Advertising	135.00	140.00	140.00	133.68
Total Income		5,885.72	18,985.78	8,024.31	9,689.65
Expenses	DNA Study – AIMS Project	--	--	--	(10,000.00)
	Annual Meeting	--	(14,329.27)	(1,787.22)	(3,740.93)
	Directory	--	--	--	--
	Insurance	(1,027.25)	(1,037.25)	(1,032.25)	(1,032.25)
	Newsletter	(740.50)	(872.89)	(890.72)	(916.06)
	Communications Director	(2,025.00)	(3,201.31)	(4,838.75)	(3,332.07)
	Organizational Expenses	(50.00)	(50.00)	(50.00)	--
	Website	(243.94)	(195.99)	(256.90)	(226.90)
	Dues Collection Expenses	--	--	--	--
	Bank Charges	--	--	--	--
Total Expenses		(4,086.69)	(19,686.71)	(8,855.54)	(19,248.21)
Net Income		1,799.03	(700.93)	(831.53)	(9,558.56)
Cash, beginning of year		22,253.36	22,954.29	23,785.82	33,344.38
Cash, end of year		24,052.39	22,253.36	22,954.29	23,785.82



Membership Application/Renewal Form

Chestnut Growers of America, Inc.

Please complete application and **EITHER** mail to:

Chestnut Growers of America, Inc., Attn: Jack Kirk, 2300 Bryan Park Avenue, Richmond, VA 23228

OR email (scanned copy or fillable PDF, available for download at www.chestnutgrowers.org/resources.html) to: jackschestnuts@gmail.com.

Instruction for completing PDF application: Download fillable PDF and save it to your computer. Open the PDF with Adobe Acrobat or Reader (not a web browser). Fill out the form by clicking in the purple text bars. Go to File > Save As, and then save the PDF with your name (for example, "CGA 2020 Membership Application - Smith). Before emailing your application, close Adobe Reader, and then re-open your application and make sure the information you filled in still appears in the document. Then attach your application to your email to Jack.

For dues payment, **EITHER** mail check to Jack Kirk at Richmond address; **OR** submit your dues online via PayPal at www.chestnutgrowers.org/paydues.html. **Please ensure that you have submitted both your application and dues.**

A Farm/Business/Organization Name:

B First Name

Last Name

First Name

Last Name

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------

(Individual/First Household Member)

(Second Household Member)

New Member Application

Renewal *(please complete sections I-K below)*

(please complete sections C-K below)

No updates to lines C-H below. Please use info from last year.

My information has changed. I have provided updates below.

C Address

D City

State/Province

Zip/Postal Code

Country

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------

E Phone

Fax

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
----------------------	----------------------

F Email

Website

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
----------------------	----------------------

G Acreage in Chestnuts

of Trees

Year First Planted

Previous Year's Production (lbs)

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------

H Cultivars Grown

I Please send newsletters in the following format (*\$5.00/year for print to cover cost of printing and postage*):

Email Only

Print Only

Both Email and Print

J Listing on the CGA website grower directory (chestnutgrowers.org/growers; see reverse for more info):

Free Listing

Paid Listing

Please do not list my information on the website.



Continued on reverse →

New Member or Renewal before April 1

K	Membership Dues	
	Household Membership	\$55.00
	Individual Membership	\$45.00
	Associate Membership	\$60.00
	Print Format Newsletters (see I above)	\$5.00
	Paid Listing on CGA Website (see J above)	\$25.00
	Total dues for this year:	

Renew Today!

A \$10 late fee is applied after April 1; after that date dues increase to \$65 for a household membership and \$55 for an individual membership.

Renewal after April 1

K	Membership Dues	
	Household Membership	\$65.00
	Individual Membership	\$55.00
	Associate Membership	\$70.00
	Print Format Newsletters (see I above)	\$5.00
	Paid Listing on CGA Website (see J above)	\$25.00
	Total dues for this year:	

Today's Date:

Listings on chestnutgrowers.org Grower Directory

Paid listings include a photo of you taken in your orchard/farm, your orchard name, address, phone number, email, website link, and a description of your orchard. This is a great way to make your information stand out to potential customers! Free listings include the orchard name, address, and phone number.

If purchasing a paid listing, send a high-quality photo and your written description (150-200 words) to the webmaster at chestnutgrowersofamerica@gmail.com.

Paid Listing Example

Allen Creek Farm

PO Box 841, Ridgefield, WA 98642
(Website) (Email) Phone: 360-887-3669



Planted in 1999, Allen Creek customers throughout flour and a delicious product are inspected annually certificate that allows them to sell WSDA is done on the farm. The Youngs practice sustainable population and a foliar nutrient needs of the trees and is not a potential source of

Nuts are refrigerated within 24 hours of harvest at 33° F

Curious about just how things are done? Visit our website trees to you. (2016)

Free Listing Examples

Chestnut Ridge of Pike County
18483 US Hwy 54
Rockport, IL 62370
217-437-4281

Thistle Creek Orchard
35 Shady Ln.
Avon, IL 61415
309-678-7216

Green Glades Chestnuts
10396 E. 1000th St.
Macomb, IL 61455
309-255-6189

Twinsholler Chestnut Orchards
1514 190th Ave.
Cameron, IL 61423
309-221-2955

Atlas Nuts
18521 US Hwy 54, Rockport, IL 62370
516-641-4513



Washington Chestnut Company

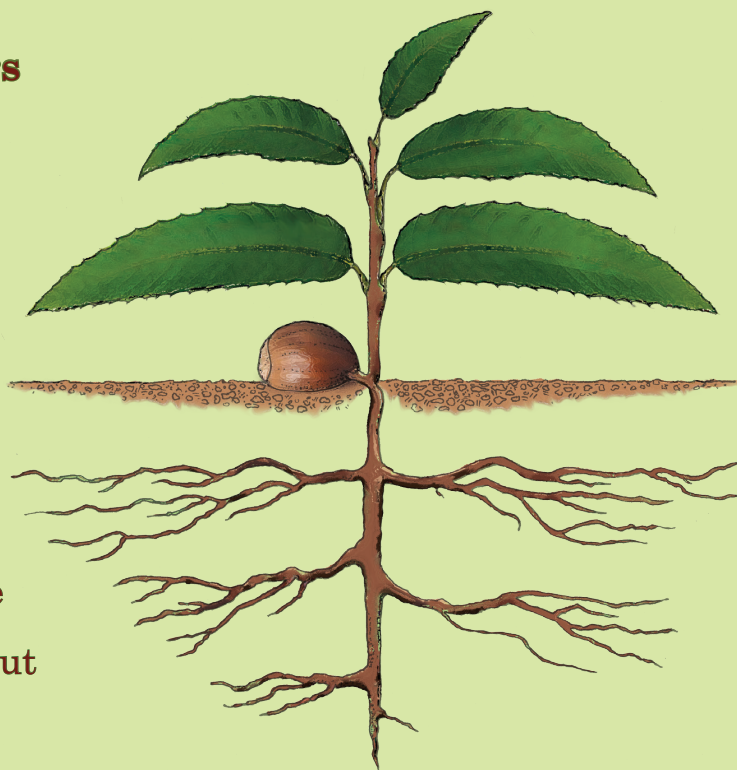


Quality Chestnut Trees from a Reliable Source!

Washington Chestnut Company has become an industry leader in the propagation of chestnut trees. The chestnut trees we offer are grown in the Pacific Northwest, free of exposure to chestnut blight and gall wasps.

Available Cultivars

Colossal
Bouche de Betizac
Prococe Migoule
Maraval
Marsol
Marigoule
Marrisard
Bisalta #2
Bisalta #3
Belle Epine
Gillet
Szego
Regis Montis
Regina Montis
Marrone di Comballe
Marrone di Marradi
Pure American Chestnut
Bergantz
...and more!



Our web site has full descriptions of each cultivar and lots of help with growing chestnut trees.

www.WashingtonChestnut.com

Washington Chestnut Company
6160 Everson Goshen Rd., Everson, WA 98247
Phone (360) 966-7158



Chestnut Growers of America
 8 Hanson Street Apt A
 Dover, NH 03820

THE CHESTNUT GROWER

Winter 2021



Our Nuts are Bigger!



DUNSTAN CHESTNUTS™

- Proven growth and production throughout the U.S. for decades
- Completely blight resistant
- Large, sweet, easy to peel nuts, better tasting than European hybrids

www.chestnuthilltreefarm.com
 1-800-669-2067

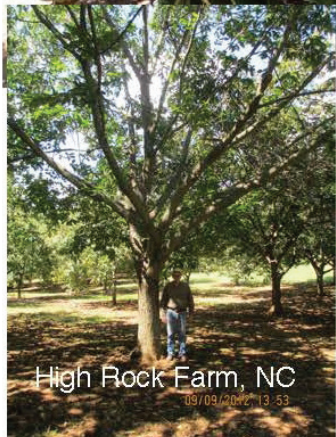
email: chestnuthilltreefarm@gmail.com



Wilson Orchards, VA



Delmarvelous Orchards, DE



High Rock Farm, NC



Chestnut Ridge of Pike County, IL