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Chestnut catkins and female flowers.

MSU CHESTNUT PROGRAM OVERVIEW AND ADVANCES IN POLLINATION, TISSUE CULTURE, AND QUALITY ASSESSMENT

By Dr. Dan Guyer, Professor Emeritus, Michigan State University

A MODEL FOR COLLABORATION AND INNOVATION

At the 2025 Joint Annual Meeting of the Northern Nut Growers Association and the Chestnut Growers of America in Lansing, Michigan, Dr. Dan Guyer, Professor Emeritus of Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering at Michigan State University and Coordinator of MSU's Rogers

Reserve, delivered an opening keynote that underscored decades of progress in chestnut research. His presentation, titled "Chestnut Programming at Michigan State University; A Land Grant model at its best!" reflected on how collaboration between research and industry has positioned Michigan as a national leader. He credited the late Dr. Dennis Fulbright as well as long time research technician Mario Mandujano for building the foundation that made the MSU Chestnut

Program one of the most respected and impactful in the country.

UNDERSTANDING POLLINATION SYNCHRONIZATION

Guyer detailed MSU's long-term pollination studies and observations, explaining that flowering synchrony between cultivars remains essential for consistent yields. MSU's field data have revealed how

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THE CHESTNUT GROWER

Winter 2026

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

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Steve Jones, Director – *Colossal Orchards (WA)*

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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 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 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

Season's Greetings, fellow Chestnut Growers of America!

Our next annual meeting will be July 31 through August 3, 2026, at the University of Massachusetts Amherst Campus, 300 Massachusetts Avenue, Amherst, MA 01003. More details will follow in our Spring newsletter.

I recently had the opportunity to score 500 pounds of fresh chestnuts provided by Chestnut Growers, Inc for the Carillon Museum Festival for Christmas in Dayton, Ohio. The event has done the roasting of chestnuts for visitors in the last eight years. The customers love the fresh roasted chestnuts cooked over an open fire.

This newsletter contains excellent articles. Our featured article is based on Dr. Dan Guyer's keynote address at the 2025 NNGA/CGA Annual Conference in Lansing, Michigan on chestnut programming at Michigan State University. Next up is a perspective piece by Melanie Jones entitled "Beyond the Song: Changing How America Sees Chestnuts". Next, we have an educational article on "Pruning Techniques for Wintertime" by Erin Lizotte and Mario Mandujano. Then Joel Hubbard, CGA Treasurer, has an article on "tax tips" for chestnut growers. Our member spotlight this issue is Chestnut Charlie's Organic Tree Crops. Our final article is "Quality Control for Fresh Chestnuts" by Rick Hartlieb.

We updated the leadership team at our last meeting. Melanie Jones has taken over as our new Vice President, succeeding Sara Fitzsimmons. I want to thank Sara for all her dedication and passion for the chestnut industry. She did an outstanding job as a leader in the Chestnut Growers of America organization, and I wish her well. Also, I want thank Jack Kirk for providing excellent leadership in the past ten years as Treasurer for CGA.

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, breeding work, and to further the interests and knowledge of chestnut growers. Thank you all for your contributions to CGA.

I hope you had a wonderful holiday with your family and friends.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Roger Blackwell".

Roger Blackwell
CGA President

BEYOND THE SONG:

WHY CHANGING HOW AMERICA SEES CHESTNUTS STARTS WITH US

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

Every December, Americans sing about chestnuts. They picture an open fire, a cozy living room, and a holiday treat that—ironically—most have never actually tasted. The song keeps the memory alive, but it also traps the chestnut in nostalgia. And for those of us putting in the years of labor and patience to bring this crop back, that's a problem.

The challenge is to move our product from a cultural curiosity back to a modern staple. As growers, overcoming this perception is both our challenge and our greatest opportunity.

In early January, I'll be giving a talk at the University of Kentucky Fruit & Vegetable Growers Conference titled "Beyond the Song: Changing How America Sees Chestnuts." I chose that title because it bridges two worlds—the romantic image most Americans hold and the real-world potential of a crop poised to reshape sustainable agriculture. The conversation is designed to spark curiosity, yes, but it's ultimately about showing how the story of chestnuts connects soil health, community, and consumer curiosity to a crop that is profitable, practical, and perennial.

For those of us growing, harvesting, or selling chestnuts, our work is changing. The goal is no longer simply to produce a high-quality crop. It's to reintroduce a generation of consumers to what chestnuts really are: a fresh, versatile food with deep agricultural roots.

DEMAND IS SURGING: WHY OUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE ISN'T SUPPLY, IT'S EDUCATION

Results from the 2024 Chestnut Growers of America survey told an encouraging story: 68% of growers reported increased demand, and more than half said their supply can't keep up. That progress is a direct result of the effort you've put in, and it is worth celebrating.

Yet nearly 60% of respondents said their customers still need basic education—how to store chestnuts, how to tell if they're



fresh, or what to do with them once they get them home. Demand is rising faster than understanding. And as many of us have learned firsthand, education is what turns curiosity into commitment. We cannot expect this market to mature if we do not actively nurture that understanding—and that work begins with clear, consistent communication.

THE AMPLIFIER EFFECT: HOW GROWERS CAN TURN AUTHENTIC CONTENT INTO SALES

Each of us plays a role in that education. While broad adoption of SEO, AEO, and AI-driven visibility will be key to reaching modern consumers, we can all start with three things right now:

- A Facebook post showing the shine of freshly harvested nuts.
- A farm newsletter sharing a recipe or storage tip.
- A short video showing how to score and roast chestnuts in a convection oven.

These simple, authentic acts build recognition and trust—and they make your farm discoverable in both traditional and AI-powered search.

As my United Chestnuts co-founder and digital strategist Kim Douglass recently wrote for *Masthead Media* in her article "Culture and Code in Marketing" (<https://mastheadmedia.com/blog/culture-and-code-in-marketing>), tools like SEO, AEO, and GEO (Generative Engine Optimization) are not engines of culture—they're amplifiers. "They don't invent meaning," she explains. "They only spread what's there."

That's exactly where our opportunity lies. We already have the content. Our collective work is rooted in heritage, patience, and ecological integrity. If we share that core truth, these digital tools can help it travel farther and reach audiences who've never experienced a real chestnut. But without our authentic story—without the feeling of belonging it creates—there's nothing for the amplifier to carry.

United Chestnuts—co-founded by Kim Douglass and me—is helping advance this effort by building growers access to shared storytelling frameworks, search-optimized templates, and educational resources at unitedchestnuts.com/resources. Together, we're building a digital foundation that helps make chestnut farming *visible, viable, and collaborative—nationwide*.

When people see us, hear us, and learn from us, they begin to view chestnuts not as a holiday novelty but as a wholesome, versatile food worth seeking year-round. That's how we move from seasonal sales to sustained demand.

BEYOND THE ORCHARD: WHY UNIFIED STORYTELLING IS THE NEXT FRONTIER OF COOPERATION

The chestnut community has always been collaborative by nature. From co-ops and grower networks to partnerships with

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microclimates influence pollen shed and female receptivity windows, allowing growers to select cultivars strategically. By mapping pollen release and flower receptivity, researchers have identified ways to improve yield reliability and nut set. “Chestnuts don’t follow a fixed schedule,” Guyer said, emphasizing the need for data-driven orchard planning. These studies now inform grower recommendations across the industry and are helping predict compatible cultivar pairings for new plantings.

TISSUE CULTURE: THE FUTURE OF PROPAGATION

He then introduced the audience to one of the program’s most promising frontiers—tissue culture propagation. In controlled lab environments combined with field trials, MSU scientists are now growing exact clones of high-performing cultivars, each capable of thriving in regional conditions. This technology, he explained, could transform commercial nurseries by providing consistent, disease-resistant trees at scale. “It’s about reducing risk and increasing reliability,” he said. For growers facing grafting challenges or limited scion supply, tissue culture represents the next major leap in orchard expansion.



Tissue culture chestnut propagation.

PRECISION TOOLS FOR POSTHARVEST QUALITY

As part of MSU’s Rogers Reserve programming, two of the efforts scientists and engineers are involved with are: 1) testing precision heat treatments and, 2) imaging systems that assess internal quality without damaging the nut. Heat treatments cannot eliminate issues such

“Research alone won’t build a market — partnerships will.” — Dr. Dan Guyer



Computed tomography imaging of desirable and defective carrot and chestnut.

as fungal or insect damage/presence that has already occurred on chestnuts prior to harvest, but it has strong potential to arrest the issues and prevent further postharvest development of such. The electronic sorting systems being studied advance beyond commercially available equipment in being able to see within a hard-shelled commodity and discern good from defective raw product based on computed tomography technology – potentially giving new control over product quality and optimal utilization should the technology be able to move to commercialization.

FROM RESEARCH TO REAL-WORLD RESULTS

Guyer emphasized that technology alone cannot sustain industry growth—it must translate into practical tools. He highlighted collaboration with Chestnut Growers, Inc. in Clarksville, Michigan, which now handles over 250,000 pounds of fresh nuts annually as well as Treeborn, which works with value-added opportunities. Additional programming through MSU’s Rogers Reserve has worked to develop small- to mid-scale mechanical harvesters and has incorporated a mechanized peeling line capable of processing up to 1,000 pounds per hour. Such efforts prove that mechanization can improve profitability and hopefully

enhance the future of the chestnut industry nationwide.



Saltation Sieve Separation concept prototype for mid-scale chestnut harvest.

A CALL TO KEEP GROWING TOGETHER

As he concluded, Guyer reflected on the future of chestnut production and the importance of collaboration across universities, co-ops, start-ups, and growers. “Research alone won’t build a market—partnerships will,” he said. His closing remarks were a reminder that while scientific progress drives innovation, shared learning ensures its success. He encouraged growers to engage in cooperative trials and continue expanding regional data collection to guide the next phase of industry growth along with MSU...a Land Grant approach. 🍅



Member Spotlight

Chestnut Charlie's Organic Tree Crops

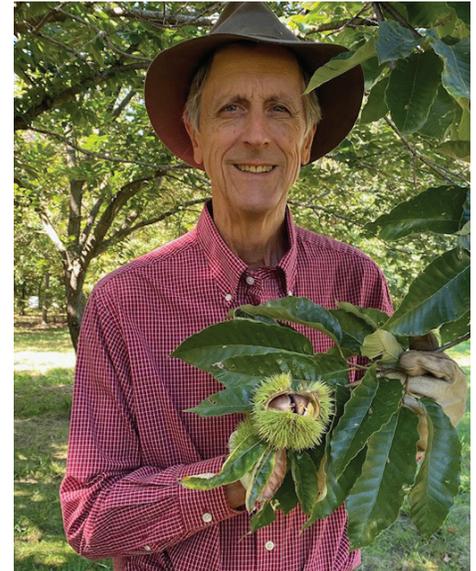
We were two professionals in our mid-career with mid-level enthusiasm. One day, we thought, we might pursue the good life doing something healthy, organic, and uniquely worthwhile.

When that day came, we planted 20 acres of farmland in Kansas into Christmas trees interplanted with nut trees, including chestnut, a species we had then only read about. Thirty years later, chestnuts are our labor-of-love and our business.

The planting of thousands of trees by hand and shovel was the easy part. Nurturing and improving an organic chestnut orchard in Kansas season after season takes more work than we had at first imagined. Challenges included:

late spring freezes, early fall freezes, droughts, windstorms, too alkaline soil, voles, gophers, deer, and herbicide drift from neighboring farmers. There was no local co-op or market for chestnuts in our region. We had to re-invent, copy, and adapt how to harvest, clean, sort, refrigerate, pack, ship and, especially, market the chestnuts. We learned much at CGA and NNGA conferences and from fellow growers.

Now it is our pleasure to grow chestnuts for food following only organic practices, harvesting the beneficence of sun and rain and soil. Our harvesters each fall enjoy the simple primal satisfaction of gathering food from the forest floor. And many of our customers, including grocery stores



and individuals, both local and distant, come back, repeating year after year. That is, to us, uniquely worthwhile.

—Charles (Charlie) NovoGradac & Deborah (Debbie) Milks

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Continued from page 3...

universities, chefs, and educators, our collective effort is the bedrock of this industry.

Consumer education is the next frontier of that collaboration. The more consistent we are in the stories we tell—about freshness, flavor, and sustainability—the faster consumer confidence will grow.

CGA is already working toward this goal through shared marketing tools, educational resources, and expanded outreach partnerships. Together, we're helping consumers connect the dots between what's in the song and what's in the orchard.

THE LEGACY WE'RE PLANTING: A CALL TO ACTION FOR THE NEXT GENERATION OF CHESTNUTS

This year, as you plan for your next harvest, **think one step beyond your rows of trees.** Think about the customers who are curious but uncertain. Think about how your farm can help rewrite the American narrative about chestnuts—one photo, one recipe, one conversation at a time.

Because beyond the song lies a powerful

truth: we are growing more than trees. We're growing awareness, connection, and legacy.

If we do this together, the next generation won't just sing about chestnuts—they'll be cooking with them, planting them, and passing them on.

DIGITAL DISCOVERY TIP BOX: 3 WAYS TO MAKE YOUR FARM MORE SEARCHABLE IN 2025

1. Name Your Photos with Purpose

One of the simplest yet most overlooked steps in optimizing your online presence is how you name your image files. Before uploading to your website or social media, rename generic image files (like IMG_001.jpg) with clear, descriptive terms like fresh-chestnuts-ebb-farms-kentucky.jpg.

→ *Why it matters:* Search engines (and AI tools) don't just 'see' your images; they 'read' them. They use the file name and alt-text to understand the image content. This tiny step improves your farm's visibility on Google Images and in generative search results.

2. Use Keywords Consumers Actually Type

Add phrases like "how to cook chestnuts," "fresh chestnuts near me," or

"Kentucky chestnut orchard" into post captions, blog titles, and FAQs.

→ *Why it matters:* Simple **SEO (Search Engine Optimization)** phrases help your farm appear in both search results and **AEO (Answer Engine Optimization)** summaries—the short, AI-generated answers people now see first.

3. Keep Your Story Current

Post at least once a month with updates, harvest notes, or recipes. Use hashtags that connect region and crop, like #ChestnutsUSA, #GrowLocal, or your farm name.

→ *Why it matters:* Consistent posting signals *freshness*—a major factor for algorithms that surface results in Google, Perplexity, or ChatGPT-style engines.

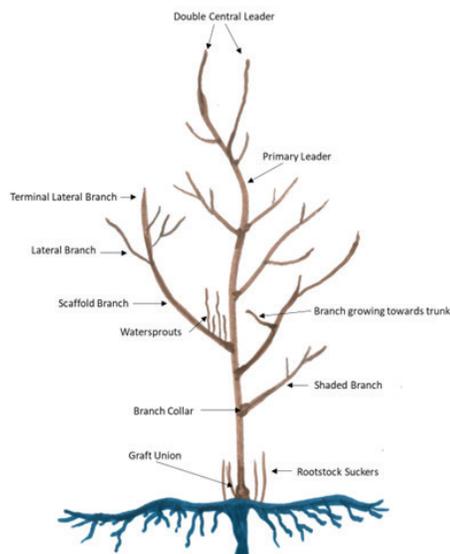
Pro Tip: The more growers sharing authentic content online, the easier it becomes for consumers—and AI—to find and understand chestnuts. That's the future United Chestnuts is helping to build: making chestnut farming *visible, viable, and collaborative*—nationwide.

Contributions by Melanie Jones and Kim Douglass, Co-Founders of United Chestnuts. 🍅

CHESTNUT PRUNING BASICS

By Erin Lizotte and Mario Mandujano, Michigan State University Extension

Pruning is equal parts art and science and can help growers address several goals on the farm. Growers prune to maintain structural integrity, manage crop load, allow for easy machinery and labor access, and to optimize quality and yield over the lifespan of the orchard.



UNIVERSAL PRUNING PRACTICES

While pruning each tree is unique, there are some universal pruning practices that growers should follow:

Never remove more than 1/3 of the canopy in a single season. This is of particular importance in large trees. The removal of large portions of the canopy at once results in reallocation of stored resources into the remaining branches the following spring and can result in excessive growth that is spindly and undesirable.

Prune in winter to limit the movement of diseases. Diseases like chestnut blight can be spread via pruning wounds when conditions are warm. Limit pruning to dormant months and cold weather. Clean and sterilize pruners between cuts using ethanol or isopropyl alcohol (70%).

Making the cut. All pruning cuts should be made at an angle to limit moisture pooling on the wound. Pruning cuts should be located at least 1-inch outside the branch collar or branch bark ridge.

This helps limit the risk of decay or disease. For large and heavy branches, be sure to back cut or score the bark on the bottom of the branch to prevent bark damage behind the cut.

PRUNING GOALS

Pruning goals can vary over the lifespan of an orchard. This article will focus on pruning for:

Establishment. Primarily occurs in years 0-5 and is focused on establishing tree shape and balance.

Maintenance. Pruning in years 5+ to maintain balance and structure.

Restoration. May occur at any time and is meant to renovate overgrown trees that have not been properly pruned.

ESTABLISHMENT PRUNING: 0-5 YEARS

Goal: To establish tree structure and balance. Keep in mind, these cuts should not be all made in one year, but over a series of years to develop good structure without hurting the tree.

1. Trees should not be pruned when planted, except to remove dead or broken branches. Quality nursery trees are typically not pruned until year 2 or 3 in the field.
2. Select your preferred canopy shape. The most common choices in Michigan include a simple open vase or an open vase with a central leader.
3. Easy cuts
 - Prune out any dead or broken branches. These branches do not count towards the 1/3 annual canopy removal limit.
 - Prune out crossing/rubbing branches, pendulant branches or those with too wide or narrow of a branch angle. Branch angles around 45-60° are best.
 - Prune branches that are too low to allow for equipment entry or labor access, including suckers coming up from the rootstock.

4. Complex cuts

- Keep in mind your desired canopy shape and consider removing branches that will not contribute to the desired end structure.
- Open vase: Select for approximately 6 semipermanent lateral scaffold branches to develop at somewhat evenly spaced intervals around the trunk of the tree. Selected branches should be at a height that can accommodate equipment access in the future. Overlapping or stacked branch structure should be avoided.
- Central leader: Maintain the central stem.
- Consider removing any dominating branches that are greater than 2/3 the diameter of the main stem to allow balanced development of the semi-permanent scaffold branches.

5. Clean up pruning debris and promptly bury or burn to limit the spread of diseases.



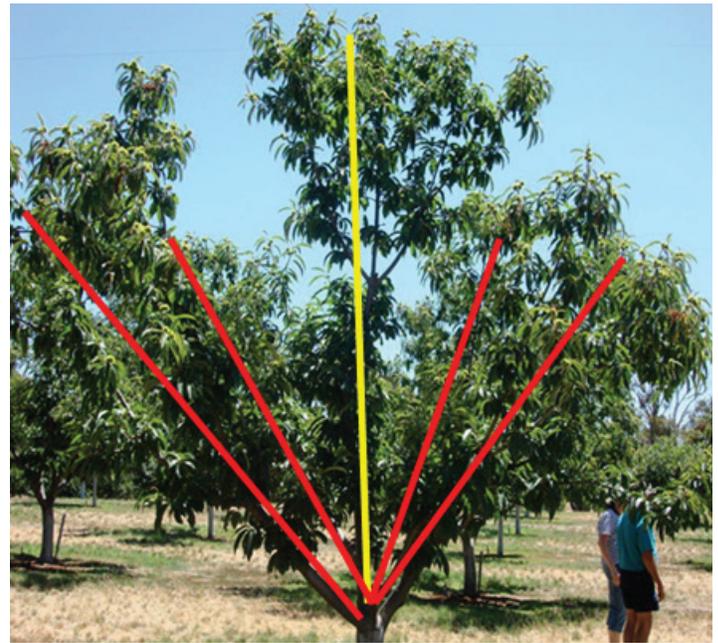
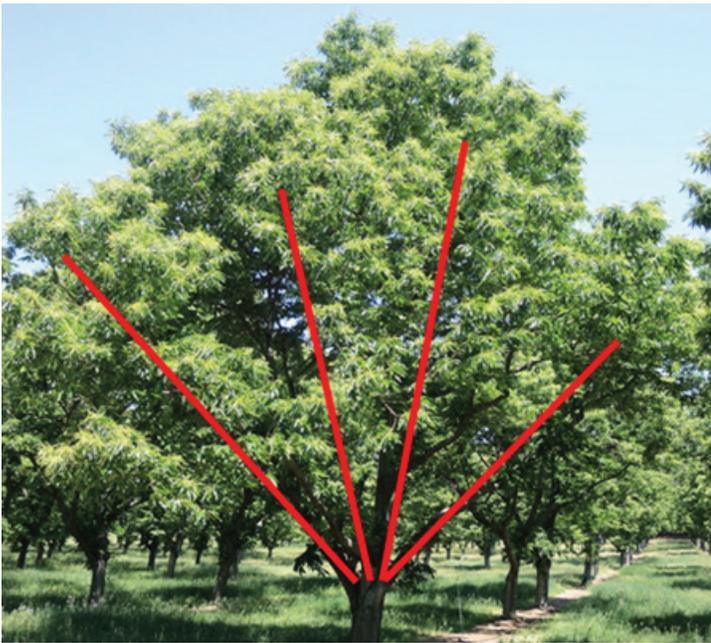
These trees have been carefully pruned to maintain branch balance and maximize the potential yield. Photo credit Erin Lizotte, MSUE.

MAINTENANCE PRUNING: 5 YEARS+

Goal: To maintain tree balance and maximize yield and quality. Keep in mind, these cuts should not be all made in one year, but over a series of years.

1. Easy cuts

- Prune out any dead or broken branches. These branches do not count towards the 1/3 canopy removal limit.



Chestnut pruned to open vase (left) and an open vase with a central leader (right). Photo credits Erin Lizotte and Dennis Fulbright, MSU.

- Prune out crossing/rubbing branches, pendulant branches or those with too wide or narrow of a branch angle.
- Prune branches that are too low to allow for equipment entry or labor access.

2. Complex cuts

- Prune out branches that are being shaded out and are unproductive.
- Occasionally, a harsher pruning that removes large branches may be necessary. For example, if one branch becomes overly dominant or begins to crowd/shade a neighboring tree. Consider removing any dominating branches that are greater than 2/3 the diameter of the main stem to allow balanced branch development. Removing large branches should be done sparingly to maintain orchard yield and balance.

3. Clean up pruning debris and promptly bury or burn to limit the spread of diseases. If using a vacuum harvester, be sure to thoroughly clean up debris and avoid flail mowing/chopping of woody plant material within the orchard.

RESTORATION PRUNING: 5 YEARS+

Goal: To renovate overgrown trees that have not been properly pruned. Keep in



Overgrown orchards can be overwhelming to tackle. Start by making easy cuts, evaluating individual tree productivity, and consider your desired tree spacing. Photo credit Erin Lizotte, MSUE.

mind, these cuts should not be all made in one year, but over a series of years.

1. Easy cuts

- Prune out any dead or broken branches. These branches do not count towards the 1/3 canopy removal limit.
- Prune out crossing/rubbing branches or those with too wide or narrow of a branch angle.
- Prune branches that are too low to allow for equipment entry or labor access.

2. Complex cuts

- Prune out branches that are being shaded out or are weak or unproductive.
- Occasionally, consider removing large branches if one branch

becomes overly dominant or begins to crowd/shade a neighboring tree. Removing large branches should be done sparingly to maintain orchard yield and balance.

3. Consider removing unproductive, unhealthy, or crowded trees to allow growth and development of more desirable neighboring trees or to achieve the desired tree spacing.
4. Clean up pruning debris and promptly bury or burn to limit the spread of diseases.

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QUALITY CONTROL TO PUT A GREAT PRODUCT INTO THE MARKET

By Rick Hartlieb, Castanea Farms, Robesonia, PA

“Farming looks mighty easy when your plow is a pencil and you’re a thousand miles from the corn field.”—Dwight D. Eisenhower

This article is written from the perspective of a commercial grower of Chinese chestnuts in the mid-Atlantic region, where our production has been growing rapidly. More and more folks are planting chestnut trees across the range for a variety of reasons: chasing the lure ‘easy’ high dollar return per acre, easy access to grant funding, drinking the agroforestry Kool-Aid (that’s us), or just super excited about nuts and tree crops. Planting the trees and keeping the trees alive is the easy part. Harvesting, processing, and producing a quality product can be a different story. Just take a look at Facebook Marketplace pictures in the fall and see what is getting put out there. We do not have experience with brown rot or IKB in our Chinese orchards, so I will leave those topics to experts in their field. We do, however, have an intricate relationship of producing nuts in weevil country.

As a grower, it is our responsibility to put into the market the highest quality possible. Niche crops (like chestnuts) lack a national standard for size and quality, but there are standard customer expectations—which serve as that standard. Commodity crops (corn, wheat, etc.) have a set standard, and your quality is ranked the same whether you produce in Delaware or Iowa. Your customers come from different ethnic backgrounds, maybe wholesalers retailing your product to others, who may or may not be first time chestnut consumers. How do you get repeat sales? Sell a great product. This means making sure that the consumer receives a fresh nut that has blemish free nut kernels. Chestnuts need cold refrigeration at a high humidity to maintain freshness and reduce molding. They also need harvesting sooner than later after they drop out of the burs onto

the ground. Harvest techniques and harvesting labor is a whole story in itself!

In my opinion, as the producer of our niche crop, you need to be intimately aware of your product. If you have confidence behind your product, you can answer questions as they arise. I had many conversations this year on how to cook chestnuts and the slight differences between Chinese, Japanese, and Euro hybrid nuts. If you have different trees in your orchard, cook them the same, and see if they taste or peel equally. If not, I would recommend segregating types when retailing. Many customers will crack open a fresh nut with their teeth to try it raw. How is that experience going to be? The producer should have the confidence to do that themselves. You don’t want a juicy weevil, sour kernel, moldy ends, or muddy nuts in your mouth—who would! Here are some quality control items to look for when processing your nuts:

SPLITS

Splits are cracks in the shell that have occurred from harvest (driving the tractor over them), helium damage (nut outgrows itself—I see that more in Japanese nuts) or small splits on the bottom. Any place that nut is exposed is a pathway for mold to take root.

CHESTNUT ANTHRACNOSE

Formerly known as blossom end rot, this disease shows itself as black lesions on the bottom of the nut kernel. The outside of the shell may have a black tip, or it may be moldy, depending on how long it has been in storage. Nuts that are very fuzzy can be hard to distinguish. Squeezing the nut looking for a soft bottom tip will give you a clue. Not rouging out at processing time will cause mold issues in storage. Not only will that cause mold on its neighboring nuts

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Happy New Year!

Your 2026 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 Joel Hubbard, CGA secretary/treasurer, at joelhubbardcpa@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 the next page. Send the form with a check made payable to Chestnut Growers of America, Inc. to Joel Hubbard, CPA, P.O. Box 445, Social Circle, GA 30025-0445.

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 of last year, your dues are already paid for this year, so no action is needed at this time.



Membership Application/Renewal Form

Chestnut Growers of America, Inc.

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

Chestnut Growers of America, Inc., Attn: Joel Hubbard, CPA, P.O. Box 445, Social Circle, GA 30025-0445

OR email (scanned copy or fillable PDF, available for download at www.chestnutgrowers.org/resources.html) to: joelhubbardcpa@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 2026 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 Joel Hubbard at joelhubbardcpa@gmail.com

For dues payment, **EITHER** mail check to the above 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

(Individual/First Household Member)

(Second Household Member)

New Member Application

(please complete sections C-K below)

Renewal *(please complete sections I-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

E Phone

Fax

() ()

F Email

Website

G Acreage in Chestnuts

of Trees

Year First Planted

Previous Year's Production (lbs)

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	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Household Membership	\$55.00
<input type="checkbox"/>	Individual Membership	\$45.00
<input type="checkbox"/>	Associate Membership	\$60.00
<input type="checkbox"/>	Print Format Newsletters (see I above)	\$5.00
<input type="checkbox"/>	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	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Household Membership	\$65.00
<input type="checkbox"/>	Individual Membership	\$55.00
<input type="checkbox"/>	Associate Membership	\$70.00
<input type="checkbox"/>	Print Format Newsletters (see I above)	\$5.00
<input type="checkbox"/>	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.

2026
NNGA / CGA
Joint Annual Conference

Friday, July 31st - Monday, August 3rd

University of Massachusetts Amherst
Amherst, MA

Continued from page 8...

in the bin, but it can also make many nuts have an off odor of mold. If your nuts are getting soft, is that because they have dried out a little bit, or because they are diseased? Crack some open to check them out.

WEEVILS

There has been extensive research on managing weevils, and it can be found with some quick Google searches. MSU Extension looks to have the most recent publication on it: <https://www.canr.msu.edu/resources/biology-and-management-of-the-lesser-chestnut-weevil-in-michigan-chestnut-orchards>. You need to figure out the management strategy that works for you and your operation. In my opinion, it is not economically feasible to commercially grow quality chestnuts in heavy weevil territory with only organic controls. 100% nut collection multiple years in a row is one way. We process nuts from trees surrounded by miles of row crops, and nuts are 100% collected in the backyard. They still have a 15% infestation rate. Trees at our home farm that are not sprayed are harvested, and the sheep turned in to eat all of the tiny nuts and ones we miss—those are 30% infestation rate. On an orchard even at 1 acre in scale, you will undoubtedly have small nuts that you miss harvesting. Weevils hatch out almost as soon as they drop, and continue the lifecycle. Incorporating livestock at harvest time has food safety implications, so you need to wait until you are done picking, which means there will be infested nuts that live another year. Infested nuts in cold storage will continue to emerge well after Christmas. Weevil management guidelines state that your nuts should be treated with a hot water bath, 120°F for 20 minutes. Again, some good research has been done on this, so we will go off that guidance here. Your nut jacuzzi of choice may be a small sous vide, or a large dunk tank. In our operation, we use a 200 gallon stock tank, powered by a Rinnai 199 propane tankless heater. We soak in mesh bags, and treat about 150 pounds of nuts per charge. Floating does not accurately identify nuts where there has not been emergence. The water bath *kills* the weevil eggs and larvae. It does not magically make your weevils disappear. So, without further processing, you will sell nuts with bad blemishes and dead rotting larvae,

yummy! Weevils can easily infest >50% of an untreated crop. Heavy infestations can yield >5 worms *per* nut! Weevil egg laying holes are also an entry spot for pathogens, and tend to be moldy in long term storage.

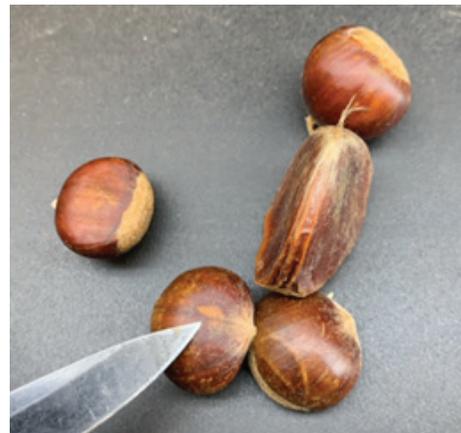
Again, knowing your product is key. You can painstakingly rogue out infested nuts. Easy step 1—toss the nuts with exit holes. Hard step 2—look for the entrance holes where the female weevil ovipositor laid the egg. This will be a small hole, like a fine gauge hypodermic needle pierced it. The nuts themselves may have a black spot around the hole, maybe a raised fine pimple spot, or a different shade of brown. I have found after trying a couple different bulbs that a particular color of led shop light bulbs works well for my eyes to pick it out. After personally inspecting 400,000+ nuts this season, you can get fine-tuned and confident on your accuracy rate. Depending on how developed the larvae is, it may be a worm tunneling into the middle of the nut, or it could be black tunnels under the inner shell layer. Either option are unpleasant flavors and create an inedible product. While at quick glance, the nuts look fine, but crack one in your teeth and it may result in that dead juicy larvae, or a rancid black layer...not a great experience for a customer that you are trying to recruit into adding chestnuts into their diet. Solid control in the orchard with insecticides greatly reduces this risk, and drops infestation rates below 3-5%. At such a low rate, with visual inspection, the random nuts that are bad can be acceptable to the customer, and you can have the confidence of a quality product.

The defects noted above are bad, and will mold quicker than good nuts. Some folks sell them as deer nuts, seconds, or as animal feed. We feed them to our sheep, and they grow very well. If the inspection process sounds as exciting to you as described...you are absolutely correct. In this day of being unable to find reliable, cost effective labor, I anxiously await the results from a 2024 NNGA/CGA grant award to the PSU Ag Engineering department. We have provided sample nuts, and they are building a machine that will take multiple pictures, and use AI to identify good vs bad nuts. Fingers crossed!

Learn more about Rick's family and operation in this nice chestnut community P/R piece: https://www.lancasterfarming.com/country-life/food-and-recipes/pennsylvania-chestnut-farm-spreads-christmas-cheer-far-and-near/article_18a32659-c421-5d7d-a082-bdd05d218d9a.html. 🍡



Weevil entry/ovipositor hole.



Weevil entry/ovipositor hole—note different shade of brown.



Nuts cooked what were rogued out as seconds for weevil entry holes (these were floated and given hot water bath). Many blemishes and inedible nuts.

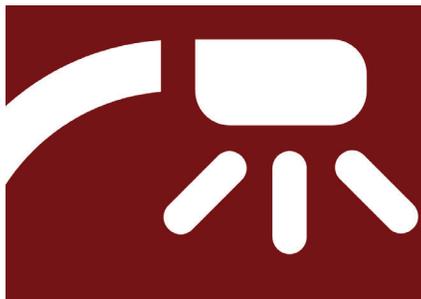
[com/country-life/food-and-recipes/pennsylvania-chestnut-farm-spreads-christmas-cheer-far-and-near/article_18a32659-c421-5d7d-a082-bdd05d218d9a.html](https://www.lancasterfarming.com/country-life/food-and-recipes/pennsylvania-chestnut-farm-spreads-christmas-cheer-far-and-near/article_18a32659-c421-5d7d-a082-bdd05d218d9a.html). 🍡



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

THE CHESTNUT GROWER

Winter 2026



Board Member Spotlight

Joel Hubbard
Georgia Chestnuts, LLC | Social Circle, GA

We're pleased to welcome Joel Hubbard of Georgia Chestnuts, LLC to the Chestnut Growers of America Board of Directors, serving as Treasurer. Joel describes himself as a "recovering CPA enrolled in the Twelve Step Program for CPAs" as he transitions from a successful financial practice into full-time chestnut farming in Georgia. In true CPA fashion, he's already putting his expertise to work by sharing a few timely year-end tax planning ideas that chestnut growers may find useful.

YEAR-END TAX PLANNING THOUGHTS FROM JOEL

As tax year-end approaches, we at Georgia Chestnuts are considering a few strategies that might also benefit fellow growers:

1. Accelerate necessary purchases.

If your business operates on a cash basis for tax purposes, consider moving essential 2026 purchases into 2025. Buying non-perishable items you'll need next year—such as tree tubes, growing supplies, nut bags, or shipping materials—can help reduce your current year's taxable income. (Note: this strategy doesn't apply to businesses on the accrual basis, since expenses are recognized when used, not purchased.)

2. Invest in efficiency.

Year-end can also be a good time to evaluate equipment upgrades that could make your business more productive and profitable—think tractors, skid steers, or attachments that expand your capabilities.

3. Spend wisely.

Remember: don't spend money just to



earn a tax deduction. Business expenses are not a dollar-for-dollar exchange unless your tax rate is 100%! Be thoughtful and strategic—avoid being penny wise and pound foolish.

— Joel Hubbard, CPA 