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Nearly Extinct American Chestnut Trees Brought to Life on the Grounds of the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History

Washington, DC - It once graced eastern forests from Maine to Georgia and its beauty and strength were legendary. Its nuts fed forest wildlife and became a cash crop for many of the families living in the Appalachian Mountains. But that was before the blight - a blight that wiped out billions of trees through the tree's original range in the span of just 50 years.

On Monday, March 20 at 1:00 p.m., two pure American chestnut trees donated by The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF) will be planted on the grounds of the Smithsonian Institution in front of the Museum of American History. The trees are products of the Foundation's national breeding program that eventually expects to produce a blight-resistant American chestnut in the next several years. This program is also supported by the National Forest Foundation.

The Smithsonian's Horticulture Division hopes the planting of the tree on the grounds of the National Museum of American History will help new generations learn the story of the American chestnut and about the efforts of TACF to bring it back to the American landscape.

"We hope that by seeing actual living trees that people will feel more connected to the American chestnut than by merely reading about it. Many Americans have probably never seen a chestnut tree. We are glad to support the research efforts of TACF by displaying these trees in the landscape of SI", said Stephen Van Hoven, horticulturist for the Smithsonian Institution's Horticulture Services Division.

TACF President and CEO Marshal Case said, "TACF is proud to be providing these trees to this special place where history comes alive for the millions who visit the museum each year. The chestnut story is one that brings back memories for the elderly and inspires hope in the young, and we're so pleased that the National Museum of American History is featuring the American chestnut in its landscaping and helps to educate the public about these wonderful trees."

The American Chestnut Foundation is a nonprofit 501-c-3 organization with more than 5,500 members nationwide and chapters in 13 states. It is headquartered in Bennington, VT and has research facilities in Meadowview, VA and a regional office in Asheville, NC. For more information, please visit www.acf.org.

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