



THE
AMERICAN
CHESTNUT
FOUNDATION

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For Immediate Release

Bendabout Farms Site of American Chestnut Meeting This Weekend

McDonald, TN -- The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF) is holding its first-ever Southern Regional Science meeting at Bendabout Farms on Saturday, February 25 to discuss the on-going efforts to restore the American chestnut to its native eastern forests. Scientists, academics and volunteers from Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Alabama, Georgia and Kentucky will share “best-practice” ideas that can be used throughout the region as part of TACF’s national breeding program. Dr. Hill Craddock of the University of Tennessee - Chattanooga is in charge of local arrangements.

Dr. Paul Sisco, Regional Science Coordinator and Carolinas Chapter member said, “This is a great opportunity for all of us in this region to get together to talk about the unique challenges of growing American chestnuts in this area. We’re very interested in the idea of regional adaptability to ensure the long-term success of our national breeding program.”

The agenda includes several aspects of chestnut breeding that are unique to the South, including the impact of *Phytophthora* root rot disease, hybridization between American chestnut and Allegheny chinkapin, the Chattanooga Chestnut Project, and the support that TACF has received from the National Forest Foundation for work in the southern Appalachians.

For nearly 25 years TACF has been breeding blight-resistant American chestnuts with the single goal of restoring this keystone species. The American chestnut once graced eastern forests from Maine to Georgia, and its beauty, strength, and rot-resistance 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 nationwide. Today, the American chestnut, once on the brink of extinction, is making a comeback with the help of scientists, geneticists and volunteers such as Tennessee Chapter President Clint Neel.

“The American chestnut at one time accounted for one of every four hardwood trees most of the forests in the eastern part of the United States. We’re so fortunate to have such a dedicated and diverse group of people who want to be a part of bringing back this wonderful tree,” said Neel.

The American Chestnut Foundation is a nonprofit 501(c)-3 organization with more than 5,300 members and chapters representing 14 states. Please visit www.acf.org, www2.volstate.edu/tnchestnut/ and www.utc.edu/Faculty/Hill-Craddock/ for information about state and local activities.

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