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## Helping the American Chestnut Foundation Bring Back a Legend

The Indiana Chapter of the *American Chestnut Foundation* is planting a chestnut tree seed orchard at the *Potawatami State Park* in Tippecanoe, Indiana. Banks Hardwoods donated \$2,500 to help cover the cost of fencing to keep deer from damaging the orchard.

The *American Chestnut Foundation (TACF)* is an organization dedicated to restoring the great American chestnut as a viable, productive hardwood species, as it once was before a blight, first introduced in 1904, wiped it out. This species was once one of the most important and dominant species in the eastern United States. It was known for its decay resistance, beauty and excellent millwork qualities. Many of the early American barns, cabins and buildings were made of chestnut and still stand today. As some of these buildings have become obsolete the beams and lumber from them have become highly desirable and are being recycled for use in new homes as flooring and millwork.



This year marks the 25th anniversary of *TACF*. For those 25 years scientists have been working diligently to produce a blight resistant strain of the chestnut. In 2005 the first blight resistant nuts were harvested. Now, new seed orchards are being planted in 14 states – the true beginning of a reforestation process that *TACF* hopes to achieve before the end of this decade. Prior to these orchard experiments, most of the genetic research had been done on a national level in Meadowview, Virginia.

Each orchard will contain 60 “blocks” of 120 seedlings planted within a three acre parcel of land. The trees will be allowed to grow for three or four years or until they can produce nuts (seeds) which will be collected for examination and additional breeding experiments. Once the trees have



begun to produce nuts, the chestnut blight will be introduced into the orchard to try to affect these seedlings. At some point the foresters will select the very best tree from each of the 60 plots and pull the rest, leaving only 60 of the hardiest of the original 7,200 trees to continue to grow in the orchard. Nuts will then be harvested from those 60 superior trees to produce new seedlings and the process will repeat itself until

scientists feel they have developed a strain that will stand up to the blight. Reforestation on a mass scale can then begin!

*TACF* is well on its way to returning what was long ago one of our most important hardwood species to the hardwood lumber market. I hope that more companies in the hardwood lumber industry will get behind this program. With much support and hard work, it's only a matter of time before the Chestnut will once again grace the American landscape. A big thanks to *TACF* and all of its volunteers!