

The Canadian Sweet Chestnut

-Newsletter of the Canadian Chestnut Council-

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<http://www.canadianchestnutcouncil.ca>

Council Mission - to help restore the American Chestnut to the areas of Canada it once occupied.

Current Priorities

- 1) Breeding resistance
- 2) Breaking Isolation / Establishing Gene pool Nodes
- 3) DNA Analysis
- 4) Survey of existing Chestnuts in the wild

In this issue:

- 35th Annual Meeting Overview (Chuck Beach)
- Chair's Comments at the AGM
- Establishing Gene pool Nodes
 - Yarmouth Natural Heritage Area
 - Noisy River Project

35th Annual Meeting of the Canadian Chestnut Council (Chuck Beach)

This year's annual meeting took place on Sunday, October 22nd at the Eco – Centre located on the Tim Horton's Onondaga Farm in St. George Ontario. The meeting was held both in – person and virtually.

Following the formal AGM meeting, **Ron Casier**, Chair of the Canadian Chestnut Council provided his annual comments on the progress made during the 2022/2023 year.

Having served over 21 years, **John Hill** officially retired as a member of the Board of the Canadian Chestnut Council. In recognition of his outstanding contributions, he joins the organization as an Honorary Member.

Dr. Dragan Galic (lead researcher CCC) provided an historical overview of the CCC breeding program entitled “Breeding Resistance to Blight: 20+ Years Later”

Sarah Richer (Senior Ecologist, Species at Risk Program, RBG) – provided an “Update on the American Chestnuts at the Royal Botanical Gardens”

The meeting concluded with a tour of the American Chestnut Plantation at the Tim Hortons Onondaga Farm.

Chair's Comments for 35th AGM of the Canadian Chestnut Council held Sunday Oct. 22, 2023.

The thirty fifth year for the Canadian Chestnut Council has seen progress continue to be made in our goals to restore native blight resistant American Chestnuts to their ecological, cultural, and economic roles in Canada.

Dr. Dragan Galic with various partner groups and our tremendous volunteers have successfully completed another year of germinating seeds, grafting trees, and getting them in the ground this autumn. Inoculations of the F2 generation has continued and measurements were taken. Dragan has determined the best F2 cross selections for breeding, followed by hand pollinations, and harvesting of the F3 nuts. Breaking isolation of select chestnuts continues as does the establishment of Seed Gene Conservation Colonies. With our partner organizations, 2000 trees have been planted. A great example is the Blue Mountain Chapter of the Bruce Trail Conservancy with an excellent write up on their website in regard to the planting on their Noisy River property. An additional F3 Generation orchard has been established in our breeding program for resistance. The anticipation of the production of F4 nuts from these orchards in a few years holds much hope for the desired resistance. Also established this year was an F2 large nut orchard for future commercial purposes.

Dr. Brian Husband's Lab and Doctorate Candidate Sophia Stoltz continued their analysis of the genetic uniqueness and environmental characteristics of the Northwestern population of American Chestnut in Ontario and provided DNA analysis for submitted specimens for genetic testing. The ten-year resurvey of the native American Chestnut in Southern Ontario is anticipated for this coming year to glean additional insight into the state of the wild population and determine more parameters for best preserving the population.

Through our renewed social media presence on Facebook and Instagram, the American Chestnut and the work of the CCC is being promoted and our outreach program reinvigorated. Several presentations and displays were made to OWA chapters and interactive workshops with elementary

students at “A Taste of Brant’ and the “Carolinian Forest Festival” as well the Equal Ground Community Garden in Brantford. Our new and improved website launch is anticipated soon. We continue our cooperation with the Canadian Biotechnology Alliance Network (CBAN) in opposition to the GMO chestnut: Darling 58. In connection with CBAN we Dr. Steinbrecher at Simcoe to speak on the perils of GMOs in the natural environment.

Additional presentations are anticipated in the new year.

The Council has also continued to work with the Ontario Woodlot Association in establishing new projects sites and the protection and promotion of the American Chestnut with two articles published in their magazine “The Ontario Woodlander”.

The Council continues it’s work on updating the constitution and By-laws of the CCC to meet new governmental requirements and formalize our structure.

At this time, I wish to acknowledge the work, dedication, and support to the CCC by long term director John Hill who has served for seven terms as a director to the council. John was instrumental in the establishment and success of the Canadian Chestnut Council’s breeding program at Onondaga Farms through Gil and Molly Henderson’s generosity and the Tim Horton Foundation. John has worked tirelessly for the council and the American Chestnut as a guide, mentor, and all-around supporter for 21 years plus.

We also wish to thank Ken MacGillivray who has been a director for four years. Gentlemen Thank you for all your efforts.

I also wish to note the passage of a great Chestnut supporter and volunteer of the council’s: Don Campbell. Don and his wife Phoebe were dedicated volunteers especially during seeding at Simcoe. Lastly, I wish to give a heart felt thank you to all the extraordinary volunteers that have participated in the various work bees on behalf of the Canadian Chestnut Council this past season. Without you and your generous sharing of time and energy we could not get the necessary work accomplished.





Dragan Galic (CCC Lead Researcher)



Sarah Richer (Senior Ecologist, Species at Risk Program -RBG)



Establishing Gene Nodes

A priority of the Canadian Chestnut Council is to ensure a gene pool of American Chestnut trees for future generations. The Council works with interested groups to establish these gene nodes. With the help of partner organizations over 2,000 trees have been planted

Yarmouth Natural Heritage Area – students from the Environmental Leadership Program at East Elgin Secondary School planted 500 native trees and shrubs as part of their co-op placement. Included in the tree plant were 216 American Chestnut Tree saplings provided by the Canadian Chestnut Council.

Noisy River Project – following article reprinted with permission of the Blue Mountain Bruce Trail Club. The article first appeared in the BMBTC Fall Newsletter

Chestnut Tree Planting Project

Led by: Stan Kaczmarek



The American Chestnut was once one of the most essential timber and nut-producing timber species in the Carolinian forest of Southern Ontario. The tree is a designated species at risk in Ontario and Canada. Efforts by the [Canadian Chestnut Council \(CCC\)](http://www.canadianchestnutcouncil.ca) aim to save this once majestic tree.

In partnership with the CCC, the BTC is working to provide areas of suitable meadow to facilitate the planting of American Chestnut seedlings as part of a restoration initiative.

One such area was identified on the BTC's Noisy River Property located in the Blue Mountains Club section, of ~2 acres, with compatible soils, located just south of the Noisy River Provincial Nature Reserve. The hatched area in the aerial map here denotes the meadow in which planting took place.

The BMBTC took delivery of 120 Chestnut seedlings on Oct. 11, and thanks to an army of volunteers, the planting took place on Oct. 12. The seedlings were planted on a 25 ft x 25 ft pattern previously flagged to speed up the process. Holes had to be dug to the correct depth, and the seedlings planted according to the meticulous instructions provided by the CCC.

CCC also provided 7 ft stakes, which had to be driven into the ground and attached to the rodent and deer guards. Coconut mats were also installed at the base of the stakes to suppress the competition. Overall, it is a very labour-intensive endeavour, and all volunteers deserve congratulations for a job well done. Special thanks to:

- Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority, who put us in touch with some of the volunteers
- The Waypoint Center
- BMBTC volunteers

Want to learn more? The history of the American Chestnut can be found at www.canadianchestnutcouncil.ca, and you can [watch this video from the Canadian Chestnut Council](#).



Want more information:

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