

A Future for American Chestnuts

The trees are all started from seed, sourced to the best of my abilities to procure them from breeders working with true-to-type American chestnuts.

Many people seem to have written off the American chestnut's future, moving immediately to hybrid and Asian cultivars that are known to have superior resistance to the blight. This attitude precludes us, the original vector of the blight that brought the initial demise of the American chestnut, from giving these trees a chance to use the wonders of natural selection, genetic recombination, and innate as well as adaptive immunity to learn to overcome the initial susceptibility to the disease and continue to live (and hopefully once again thrive) in their native range.

While exotic species rarely support insect life, as the insects have not coevolved with these hosts like they have with natives, [native *Castanea* species are documented to support over 100 species of caterpillars](#) - helping bolster the bottom of the food web in support of Bluestem's mission to ensure the incredible biodiversity that it supports will remain resilient well into the future.

I am grateful to Bluestem for the willingness to give a safe, long-term home to these young, 2nd year seedlings in the hope that not only I, but everyone who visits and cares for Bluestem, will have the opportunity to watch these trees grow into giants.

In the event that they manage to beat the odds and reach maturity, I hope you will join the squirrels and me in enjoying their delicious, bread-like nuts and taking a moment to plant some and further our efforts to ensure these trees, like all of the priceless and irreplaceable biodiversity of our ecoregion, have an opportunity to thrive as we learn to steward and care for them in ways that ensure long-term sustainability for now and generations to come.

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