

American Chestnut

Botanical/Latin name *Castanea dentata*



American Chestnut, *Castanea dentata*



simple lanceolate leaf



- ❖ Chestnut trees can grow as tall as 100 feet and live up to 300 years
- ❖ Once called the Redwoods of the East, they are a member of the Beech family
- ❖ Chestnuts were an important source of food for wildlife and people historically
- ❖ American Chestnut wood is rot resistant
- ❖ Deer eat young trees to the ground
- ❖ The unusual long flower produces a burr typically containing 3 nuts which open when ready to be eaten
- ❖ The natural range is from Maine to Georgia and west to the Ohio River Valley
- ❖ The tree will grow wherever Red Oaks are found in New England
- ❖ The leaves are longer than most trees and easy to identify
- ❖ It is estimated that 3 to 4 **billion** (wrap your brain around that) American Chestnut trees were destroyed in the first half of the 20th century by the chestnut blight after its initial discovery in 1904. This blight, an airborne fungus, kills the trees to the ground. While the roots may still put up new growth it becomes infected again in an unending cycle. The number of large surviving trees within its former natural range is probably fewer than 100. There are pockets of surviving trees outside its former range where the blight has not affected them.
- ❖ Several organizations are attempting to breed blight-resistant chestnut trees. One of these groups, The American Chestnut Foundation, is attempting to restore the American Chestnut to its original habitat. The City of Pittsfield actively works with this Foundation by planting seeds in a chestnut seed orchard that will one day hopefully produce disease resistant seeds. These will then be used to restore this majestic tree back to our forests. You can volunteer to plant these seeds and be a part of this amazing effort and history. Contact Marissa at RSVP (413) 499-9345 for information on this opportunity.

This Tree of the Month series is brought to you by the City of Pittsfield, RSVP and Pittsfield Tree Watch, a volunteer group that promotes tree stewardship and education in our City.

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To volunteer or for more information, call RSVP (413) 499-9345