

See how they grow

American chestnut seedlings introduced at Louisville District lakes

Keith Chasteen, operations division

On Nov. 20, 2012, vegetation in the Louisville District became a little more diverse with the planting of American chestnut trees at Carr Creek Lake in Sassafras, Ky., and Green River Lake in Campbellsville, Ky. Each lake received eight tree seedlings from the Kentucky Chapter of The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF).

A national memorandum of understanding exists between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and TACF, which facilitates opportunities such as the establishment of the display planting at each of these lakes. The value of TACF's contribution of these trees to the lakes is \$2,000.00.

The American chestnut, which made up a quarter of the trees in Appalachia, was virtually wiped out in the early 1900s when a blight was brought to the United States on imported Chinese chestnut trees. Recent decades have seen organizations working to restore the population by cross-breeding American chestnut trees with the blight-resistant Chinese chestnut.

The display plantings at Carr Creek and Green River lakes, both in the vicinity of the lake project offices, will serve as an opportunity to share the history of



Green River Lake staff members Tyler Royce, Lori Brewster, Larry Lemmon, David Wethington, Andrea O'Bryan and Jim Goode stand next to a newly-planted chestnut tree.

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the American chestnut tree, tell about the devastation caused by the introduction of chestnut blight to the United States and to let visitors know that efforts are ongoing to restore this tree to the forests of the eastern U.S.

Dr. Anne Bobigian, an active TACF volunteer in the Louisville area, provided half of the trees from a test orchard in Oldham County, Ky.

"KY-TACF is delighted to implement a partnership with the Corps of Engineers in Kentucky in re-introducing Americans to the American chestnut," said Bobigian. "The American chestnut was almost a lost part of our heritage. Even conservationists and outdoor people can be surprised at the number of trees that the chapters of the American Chestnut Foundation have located and that we have successfully created a 'Restoration Chestnut' to begin testing for durable blight resistance. These trees will give people the opportunity to observe American chestnut trees directly."

"To see this tree is to admire it," she added, "and for some, it will be like recapturing a memory from the past. We hope some people will even be moved to join

the effort for restoration of this foundation species to the Eastern forest. There is still plenty of rewarding work left to do, now that we are part way there."

The other eight trees were provided by KY-TACF President Lynn Garrison. Garrison, along with other TACF volunteers, recently visited Carr Creek Lake to evaluate several sites as potential chestnut orchards. Recommendations of several of the sites visited were that they would provide excellent locations as "mother tree" orchards. These orchards provide space for the transplanting of root sprouts from surrounding forests, which then makes them accessible for pollination in the TACF breeding programs. From these trees, localized genetics will be preserved as blight resistance is bred into them. Future offspring will be the used to repopulate forests throughout the chestnut's native range.

Additional information on American chestnut trees and efforts to save it can be found at the TACF website: www.acf.org.



Jordan Hall, The Troublesome Creek Times

Louisville District park ranger Kevin Wright and James Madden, forest ranger, Kentucky Division of Forestry, plant an American chestnut tree at Carr Creek Lake.