



# Winkel Chestnut Farm

## Newsletter

Winter/Spring 2006  
Issue No. 1  
Next issue will be Spring 2006

### Why?

Why chestnuts? Like many in the U.S., I grew up with that basic knowledge that chestnuts were a thing of the past. They were simply lost to the world as I new it. Was I ever wrong!

Why this newsletter? If you are lucky, there comes a point in life where you ask, "Just what am I supposed to be doing here?" My answer became, "This food so basic to human existence should be coaxed back into the food system of the United States." This newsletter is a step in that process.

### A bit of history

Like many in Michigan, I first learned about chestnuts through Bill Wininger in 1990. Bill was a master salesman and blew flames into the smoldering interest in chestnuts in this area. Bill planted my first acre of Chinese chestnut in 1991. This planting was extended over the next three years to give a total of 10 acres planted.

By that time it was apparent to many of us in the Midwest that there was more to growing a chestnut crop than we knew. Some gave up on the idea, some kept working at it, and some pursued education with a vengeance.

### Where are we now?

Our orchard now consists of the survivors of those earlier years. About 1/3 of the original trees survive, the rest were lost along the way by lack of resources; knowledge, time, and energy.

But out of persistence comes opportunity. Productive cultivars of French, Italian, and Korean chestnuts have been added to our planting. This includes the popular cultivar Colossal.

### And where is it going?

We move toward a truly productive commercial orchard. However, to get to that productive operation we follow a path of research, and trial and error. We are now grafting and planting our original rows of trees into the current choice varieties. As these trees mature

and produce we will find which yield a superior crop at our location and in our climate.

### What is happening early in 2006?

During this winter/spring we will be collecting scion wood to be used for the later grafting. Next comes pruning the orchard trees. Then in April and May, grafting of trees in the field.

### What is happening later in 2006?

By June insects will become a concern. Irrigation will be used as required, and mowing as required.

And in the several weeks around the 4th of July, blossom time.

Following blossoming, the burs grow rapidly in the hot days of summer. Finally harvest comes in late September and October.

### And, what is *your* interest?

Late winter and spring orchard activities are totally dependant on the weather. We invite you to visit, observe, even participate during scion wood collection, pruning, and grafting. But again this is very weather dependant, these activities can not be done to a pre-planned schedule.

Late winter/spring activities:

- Scion wood collection and storage
- Pruning
- grafting

Other activities as the year progresses:

- Blossom time – around July 4th
- Bur development – late August
- Harvest – October
- Cooking with chestnuts – October/November

If you wish to join in let us know by email or phone. We will try to coordinate with you so you can see what is happening.

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