



Winkel Chestnut Farm

Newsletter

Spring/Summer 2006
Issue No. 2
1 July 2006
Next issue will be Fall 2006

New Farm Hours

Let's make this simple! The solution is: farm hours will be Sundays, 1PM to 5PM. The weeks when we will not be able to keep those hours will be the rare exception. During harvest season the hours will be extended.

The problem was: coordinating with people wanting to get out to the farm was difficult. Mark that problem CURED.

Thanks go out to Chef Joe

The powerful attraction of chestnuts as a crop is their versatility. On one hand they can be the most simple and ancient food from a tree. Good fresh, great roasted, easy to use in home cooking.

But on the other hand they belong in the absolute highest end of the cooking scale. Our deepest thanks go out to Executive Chef Joe Pagano of the Frederik Meijer Gardens for permitting us to participate in his Chestnut Cooking Class. A fascinating and instructive cooking demonstration. Accompanying meal prepared by Chef Joe and staff. This was dining at its absolute finest. And, chestnuts were used in every course!

As the Season Progresses

This year's transition from Winter to Spring and into Summer was moderate and normal at the farm. We have the advantage of a nearby MAWN station; Michigan Automated Weather Network. Via this station we can access online data relating to current and historical weather. Particularly helpful has been the daily minimum and maximum temperature readings. These temperature readings permit us to monitor the current season vs past years.

Equally helpful has been the Growing Degree Day (GDD) calculations. This calculation is also available for current and past years. The good news is that the accumulation of heat this year has been right on par with the past growing seasons. In addition, once the threshold GDD level was met for chestnut we dodged the critically cold weather which has accompanied poor harvest in the past.

The net result is that we can predict that this year's

Colossal harvest will begin around October 4th at our farm location. Other varieties will be dropping their crop in a predictable sequence around that time.

Blossom time is here!

It is blossom time at the chestnut farm. The male catkins are in full flower. What a sight. The trees almost appear to be covered with snow. And that aroma! It's not a scent most would seek out. Let's call it powerfully sweet.

At the same time the burs, the female flowers, are just beginning to appear. These will receive the pollen from neighboring trees to begin the bur/nut development sequence.

This is an exciting time! Come on out to the farm from late June to mid-July for a look and smell. See farm hours discussed previously.

Are you interested in growing a chestnut tree?

Be concerned about your local weather, your soil, and tree variety.

Chinese Chestnuts appear to be more cold hardy than European Chestnuts. American Chestnuts are more cold hardy than either of the above.

For a crisp sweet chestnut plant Chinese. For a larger traditionally European nut... plant European. For the real American experience consider American Chestnut but beware, chestnut blight will probably find your trees.

Michigan State University and the Michigan chestnut growers are identifying varieties that survive and produce in the Michigan climates. Contact MSU or your local chestnut growers to learn what works in your area.

Chestnuts prefer a soil balanced in sand, clay and organic matter. The balance for chestnut should be biased toward the sandy side of the scale.

For more details begin by looking at the website maintained by Professor Dennis Fulbright of MSU. You may reach Dennis' web page via our links page at www.chestnutfarms.com/Links

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