

Chestnut (*Castanea*): An Agro-Forestry Crop for the Appalachian Mountains, U.S.

Gregory Miller and Diane Doud Miller

Empire Chestnut Company, 3276 Empire Road SW, Carrollton, OH 44615 USA and
Department of Horticulture and Crop Science, Ohio State University/OARDC, 1680
Madison Avenue, Wooster, OH 44691 USA

miller.87@osu.edu

Abstract

We have worked for 25 years to development Chinese Chestnut (*Castanea mollissima*) as a horticultural crop which can be grown for nut production in the acidic soils of the Appalachian Mountains in the U.S. This is in the native range of the American chestnut (*Castanea dentata*), a forest tree which was decimated by the chestnut blight fungus accidentally introduced from Asia in the early 1900's. Major obstacles in industry development have been difficulty of vegetative propagation of superior nut-bearing trees and lack of mechanized technology for harvesting. Market acceptance of nuts, especially by individuals of European or Asian heritage, has been outstanding with demand much greater than supply. The recent emphasis on local foods has also expanded marketing opportunities for locally grown chestnuts. Technology for fresh-peeling chestnuts has been developed. Phytopathological issues include variable resistance of the trees to chestnut blight fungus and to *Phytophthora* rot, and entomological issues include chestnut weevil and perhaps gall wasps.