



FERGUSON FOREST CENTRE (FFC) REPORT: SPRING 2009

The past year has been a busy one. The big news was the acceptance and signing of a new 25-year lease, between the FFC and the municipality.

We would like to thank all the folks who supported our efforts, and the cooperation of Council, that saw the lengthy negotiations through to a happy conclusion. A special thanks to Ed Patchell and Andy Brown for all their hard work and perseverance. A great job, gentlemen. Thanks also to the FFC Board for their input and patience. Together, we did it!

You can see our new look as we have rebuilt after last year's fire. A large Coverall building has replaced the old pole barn and a smaller Coverall now houses our outlet store. This smaller Coverall gives more working space to our staff and amalgamates a number of small, less efficient structures. We've also put new shingles on a shed and got some painting done. Several greenhouses, damaged in last winter's heavy snows, have been repaired or replaced. We have also expanded our cold storage capacity and upgraded the insulation on our main building.

Nursery business has had its ups and downs, but we have managed to find new opportunities that look good for the immediate and mid-term futures. Forest tree planting programs are now in place, supported by government funding. The City of Ottawa is looking for native, seed identified stock, and hopefully, others will go the same route. A private venture is helping large customers plant maples that meet the same criteria and they will pay part of the purchase cost. We have made our municipality aware of this opportunity.

We have recently expanded our contract with the Canadian Forest Service and it's poplar and willow trials. An agreement has also been reached with the Eastern Ontario Model Forest and the State University of New York Forestry Department to locate samples (clones) of their work, in poplar and willow, on FFC land. This will help place FFC in the forefront for forest bioproduction, in Eastern Ontario.

As more and more people are looking into fossil fuel and chemical alternatives, there are strong indications that short rotation poplar and willows could become a major economic driver. We will be positioned to be the seed stock source for that market. These trees can be planted on poorer farmland and do not compete with food production. Eastern Ontario is well suited for this kind of crop, with enough potential volume to attract new manufacturing plants.

The Butternut Recovery program will be establishing a fence protected site to grow trial plantings of collected stock that, hopefully, will help find trees resistant to the canker disease that is devastating this beautiful native species.

While our physical appearance has been changing, so too has our organization. Adam Shewchuk has decided to retire from the Board of Directors. He has been with FFC since it started and his presence will be missed. Thanks Adam for all your hard work and we wish you well on your new endeavors. Dan Cooper has agreed to join the Board to bring us up to full strength. Welcome, Dan. (continued next page)

The FFFC would like to offer our deepest sympathies to the family and friends of Mr. Terry McEvoy. You will be missed, Terry.

Upcoming Events

Spring Trail Clean-Up - April 25, 2009 - 9:00 am to 12:30 pm

Clean up will start at 9:00 am and volunteers will meet at the FFC office to receive their work assignments. Workers should come dressed for the weather (warm clothing, boots and work gloves) and students will be given credits for community service hours. Free hot dogs and hot drinks will be served after clean up. Bring shears, Robertson screwdrivers, and clippers if you have them. For more information visit our web site.

Birds of the Forest "Walk in the Woods" - May 2, 2009 - 10 am to 12:30 pm

This fun and educational walk will focus on bird life in the forest during springtime. The event is open to all. Participation is free for members and their families, and there will be a nominal fee charged to non-members who attend, to cover the cost of food.

Membership Drive - May 23, 2009 - 8:00 am to 12:30 pm

The FFFC will be holding a spring membership drive at Jonsson's Independent Grocers. Volunteers will be needed to staff the booths in 2 ½ shifts between 8:00 am and 1:00 pm. If you can help, please contact Colleen at 613-258-4400.

Canada Day Parade - July 1, 2009

The Friends will be entering a float and decoration will take place on June 28th. Help will be needed to decorate the float and walk in the parade. The theme of the parade is still to be determined, but we will base whatever we do on trees from the FFC. Float ideas are welcome from all.

Forest Fair September 26, 2009, 10 am to 3 pm

... details in Fall Newsletter

Thank you also to our field staff. Their skills and dedication are a major part of our success. The Board has created and adopted a new Mission Statement. We are currently restructuring our committees and will be encouraging members to participate in them.

As our business grows we want to be visible and transparent to the public. We also want to meet our responsibilities regarding recreation, education and conservation to the best of our abilities. We are planning to move forward on the arboretum and associated recreational lands in 2009. FFC is doing its best to be a good community partner.

We are a major sponsor of Forest Fair and The Friends of the Library Book Sale. Both were very successful this past year. We also provide assistance to the local youth soccer league, St. Lawrence College and various church and service clubs for events on FFC managed lands. There is a steady use of the trails and roads by all sorts of folks who enjoy the green space.

If you, or your organization, want to hold an event at the FFC, please contact Ed Patchell at 613-258-0110 to help co-ordinate the timing and avoid conflicts with other users.

The Friends of the Ferguson Forest Centre remain strong and are working to assist in the trails program. They hope to put up more new trail markers as well as improved signage, in the New Year.

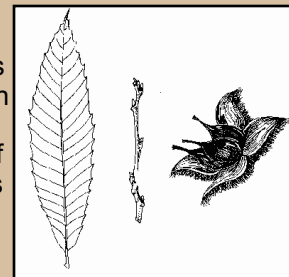
The outlook for 2009 is bright. We've got lots of work to do, but I am optimistic that we will do well! - John Wilson

THE AMERICAN CHESTNUT - (*Castanea dentata*)
A tree almost decimated in a few decades

At the turn of the century, the American chestnut, or sweet chestnut, was commonly found in the deciduous forest region of eastern North America, where it easily reached a height of 25 m and a diameter of 50 to 100 cm. Today, it seldom reaches a height of 10 m and a diameter of 15 cm. Who would have thought at that time, that a tree could be almost wiped out so rapidly? This is exactly what has happened. In less than a generation, whole stands have fallen victim to the chestnut blight, an Asian fungus accidentally imported on a related species in the early 1900s, which causes canker of the bark and withering.

Suckers are what remain of most of the chestnuts that formerly formed the oak-chestnut forest region. As the chestnut is no longer considered an important timber species, its ecology and its biological cycle are rarely the object of scientific studies. Some living roots remain, however, and these sprout suckers usually live long enough to produce a crop of seed. The species is still found in southwestern Ontario, its former range in Canada. A survey carried out in 1985 found it at forty- nine sites.

It was in 1904, at the New York Zoological Garden, that the ravages of the blight were first noticed. Like the white pine blister rust and the Dutch elm disease, the chestnut blight spread rapidly in forests where the American chestnut grew. But unlike white pine blister rust, which attacks that species via an intermediate host (*current plants*), chestnut blight spreads from tree to tree by spores carried by the wind, water, insects, and birds. In less than 50 years, the disease had spread over the whole range of the American chestnut. Not only did it destroy indigenous species it also laid waste to vast plantations of European sweet chestnut in North America.



Production of more disease-resistant hybrids of the Asian chestnuts is one solution sought by researchers. The trees thus produced show an increased resistance to pathogens, almost equal to the resistance shown by the Asian species. Molecular biology also offers another possibility.

Lastly, naturally produced hybrids should not be ignored. As cross-pollination can occur in all chestnut species, it is possible for an American chestnut to live long enough to produce flowers and cross with one of the thousands of Asian chestnuts introduced or gone wild. Such crosses would produce more resistant trees.

Hopes are high as far as the control of the chestnut blight is concerned, but the battle will be long and hard. The implementation of a biological control strategy will accordingly be more efficient if we are successful in the development of hypovirulence, thus increasing disease resistance. That way, the reintroduction and growth of the American chestnut will be facilitated, but not for many years to come.

In the meantime, we must protect all the American chestnuts left in order to conserve the genetic diversity of the species. This stately tree is part of our heritage. We must also educate the public concerning the introduction of exotic species

(Re-printed with permission of Jean Lauriault, Environmental Specialist, Canadian Museum of Nature.)

The Friends of the Ferguson Forest Centre would like to thank our corporate members for their support.

T.D Graham & Associates
Kemptville, Ontario

Podium Promotions
Winchester, Ontario

Long Island Marine, Inc
Kars, Ontario

Plastics & Signs of Ottawa
Ottawa, Ontario

Ecogen Energy, Inc
Kemptville, Ontario