

February 2011

Midwest Nut Producers Council Newsletter

The Newsletter for Professional Chestnut Growers in the Midwest

MNPC Annual Meeting March 12, 2011

The Annual Meeting of the Midwest Nut Producers Council will be held in Clarksville, MI on March 12. This is a departure from the last few years where we have met with the Michigan Nut Growers Association on campus. The reason for this change is the time constraint that has curtailed our ability to develop a good program whereby information can be transferred in a constructive manner. This year we will focus on the parameters needed for a good productive year after the devastating freeze of 2010. We haven't met since August and there are so many new issues to discuss.

With the help of Dr. Mira Danilovich, fruit tree extension educator, we will develop a spray calendar for the various pests that will be visiting your trees this year, talk about the types of materials that can be applied and when they should be applied. We will also talk about the type of equipment need and what is available for use.

We will also discuss fertilizer application, types of fertilizer and when and how to apply it.

Many of you came to the pruning workshop held at Paul Thelen's farm last April. We will revisit that pruning session and discuss the pros and cons of the various methods.

We will discuss the new germplasm that is currently being grafted for Michigan in Missouri, and what it means for Michigan chestnut growers. It will be coming from Forrest Keeling Nursery as early as this fall. How do we feel about fall plantings?

We will spend time talking about the new Italian harvester that MSU purchased in late 2010 and the things we learned about it and still need to learn. We need to determine how to effectively use it for harvest while we learn more about its promises and limitations. We also purchased a scoring machine and that was used this fall. Come hear about this machine and how it might be used for the chestnut industry in the state.

Grants Submitted

Two grants have been submitted so far this year. The first was a small grant to the Turkish government to fund the travel and work of Dr. Umit Serdar, an apple and chestnut researcher from the Department of Horticulture, Ondokuz Mayıs University. Ondokuz Mayıs University was founded only recently in 1975. The central campus is situated in Samsun, a northern city of Turkey on the shore of the Black Sea. Ondokuz Mayıs University is considered one of the largest

Universities in [Turkey](#). The name of the university (*Ondokuz Mayıs* in [Turkish](#) means "19 May"; now you know two Turkish words!) commemorates Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's landing at Samsun on 19 May 1919, initiating the Turkish War of Independence. The title of the project will be Genetic Contributions to Chestnut Quality. The overall objective of our study will be to determine the cause of kernel breakdown in 'Colossal' chestnut. Specifically, we will determine 1) if the genetic background of the nut/kernel is involved in the disorder; 2) if the affliction is graft transmissible to certain genotypes; and 3) if antibiotic treatment will alleviate symptoms of kernel breakdown. He will be here from June 15 to September 15 with his family, including his wife and three children. I hope you have a chance to meet him. He has been at many of the international chestnut meetings and has made significant contributions to orchard production.

The second grant was the huge \$6 million Specialty Crop Research Initiative proposal on which the chestnut industry and researchers worked to develop a series of priorities. After multiple meetings and discussions, researchers felt they could have the single largest impact on improving chestnut quality by researching genetics, as well as screening, storage and packaging methods. Researchers believe they should be able to improve shelf life, nutritional quality, and manage kernel breakdown and decay, among other issues of quality. It may be several months before we know the outcome of the proposal.

What's Ale-ing You?

Did you know that Michigan-grown chestnuts have been brewed into three different ales this year? First, there was the ale brewed by Jolly Pumpkin called *Fuego del Otono* (Fire of October). This is a highly spiced beer, praised by some and hated by other. Here are some typical reviews from the Beer Advocate website where the brew receives an A- (excellent rating): "A strong flavor of chestnuts comes through and provides a strongly "meaty" flavor. The tartness here is minor, but certainly noticeable. Again, lots of floral notes, specifically hibiscus, with a bit of rose petals. Quite a bit of spice to it, also, but I don't really notice anything in particular. The body is medium with a medium but lively carbonation. Even for a Jolly Pumpkin beer, this is pretty interesting. I liked it quite a bit, but it's definitely different from most of their beers." (Reviewed on: 12-30-2010). The second ale was Jolly Pumpkin's *Belipago*, a gluten-free India Pale Ale that took home the 2010 Great American Beer Festival gold medal in the Specialty Beer category. For this beer, brewmaster Ron Jeffries replaced the barley and wheat with a blend of sorghum, agave, and Michigan-grown chestnuts this was available on-tap at the Jolly Pumpkin Restaurants in Ann Arbor and Old Mission Peninsula.

The third beer traveled a long ways. The Michigan-grown chestnuts were sliced and oven dried. They were shipped to Ohio where they were shipped to Norway for brewing. Once brewed, a lot of this beer leaves Norway for the states. This beer is from the combined recipes and efforts of Nøgne Ø (they brought the juniper berries), Jolly Pumpkin Artisan Ales they brought the sweet chestnuts), and Stone Brewing Co. of San Diego, CA (they brought the sage). It is called *Special Holiday Ale*. The three breweries are considered leaders in their field. Each brewery brings something special to the recipe from their location. Jolly Pumpkin brings Michigan-grown chestnuts. I know that because it says so right on the label. This Ale also received an A-

(excellent rating) from the Beer Advocate website. Here are some reviews of the *Special Holiday Ale* that came all of the way back to Michigan from Norway: “Clear amber during the pour but lightly hazy and muddy pond water in color. A good dense tan head rises to two fingers and lowers rather quickly without very much lace at all. Delectable, complex aroma with spiciness upfront; white sage addition, a peppercorn nose and minty juniper.

The chestnuts add a tiny hint of nuttiness in the background with sharp rye and roasted amber malts. Very good holiday ale aroma. Slight spiciness opens this beer up as the juniper comes in nicely. A little minty-like tang plays well with the chocolate roasted malts and cocoa-like dryness. Very awesome holiday flavor blend. Moderate to high carbonation livens the medium-full bodied beer up a little bit. Well-balanced spice and cocoa-like dryness with a mild acrid bitterness and minty balance. A good holiday sipper perfect to share with someone around the fireplace. Very, very mild alcohol, warming comes through on the finish of this one.” (Reviewed on: 01-04-2011)

How good are Ron Jeffries and his Jolly Pumpkin Ales? You may not think too highly of his ales after tasting Fuego del Otono, but look again. In a recent *New York Times* blind taste test of 20 Belgian-style ales from all over the world, Jolly Pumpkin’s Oro de Calabaza (gold pumpkin) was given the highest rating. Oro de Calabaza was also named one of the "25 Best Beers in the World" in the October issue of *Men’s Journal*. We may be working with the best craft brewer in the country.

Submitting Cultivar Names

Three new chestnut cultivar names from Michigan are being registered to the International Society of Horticulture Science. One of these comes from the orchard of the late Norm Higgins, and the other two come from Benton Harbor. 'Labor Day' is an early harvested Korean type chestnut and 'Benton Harbor' and 'Everfresh' are Chinese chestnuts. Come to the MNPC meeting to find out more about them.

Grafting Workshop - Closing Out Sale May 14, 2011 at 9:00AM

The last and final grafting workshop will be held May 14th on the MSU campus—where it all started 11 years ago. The workshop will begin at 9:00 am and cover scion preparation, cutting, joining, and care. If you do not know how to graft trees and wish to be a chestnut orchardist, you should plan to attend this last of its kind workshop. You will take home apples that you will graft after you learn the basics. Grafting knives, machines and other supplies will be provided, as will lunch. The afternoon will consist of top-working large trees in the field. This will be its 11th and final year. After 5 years on campus we took off for three years in Traverse City and three years in Petoskey. Midwest Nut Producer Council members will receive \$10 off the workshop cost of \$50. More information will be provided later and at the Midwest Nut Producers Council annual meeting.