

Midwest Nut Producers Council Journal

The Newsletter for Professional Chestnut Growers in the Midwest

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Michigan chestnut growers have until Feb. 4 to participate in Ag Census

By Sara Long

The deadline is rapidly approaching for Michigan chestnut growers to be included in the upcoming Census of Agriculture. Growers must complete and return the census form by Feb. 4, 2013, to be included in the count.

A census of all agricultural producers is conducted every five years by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agriculture Statistics Service (NASS). The census provides an accounting of all U.S. farms and ranches and the people who operate them, land use and ownership, demographics of owners and operators, production practices, and income and expenses.

Although growers must be careful to answer every question on the survey form, chestnut growers should pay special attention

to question 3 under section 11 found on page 9. Growers must write-in "chestnuts" under the crop name column and insert the corresponding code for chestnuts (0324) under the code column. There is also space to indicate acreage.

A copy of the census is mailed to all known agricultural producers in the United States. Growers can return the census form by mail or complete the census online at www.agcensus.usda.gov.

The Census of Agriculture is the only source of uniform, comprehensive and unbiased agricultural data collected for every county in the United States. The data offers a snapshot of the value and importance of every agricultural commodity and is used by federal, state and local governments, community planners, trade associations and others to shape farm policy, design programs and make other business-related decisions.

NASS will release Census of Agriculture data beginning in Feb. 2014. Detailed reports will be published in both electronic and print formats for all counties, states and the nation.

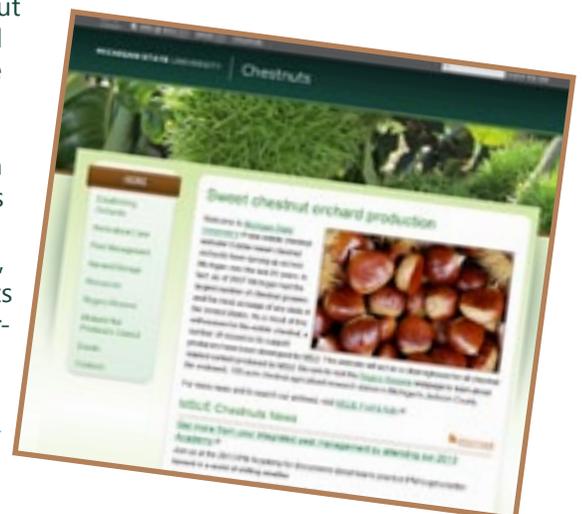
Michigan growers who have not received a Census of Agriculture form by Feb. 1 should contact Michigan NASS statistician Joe Sampson at the USDA NASS Michigan field office by calling (517) 324-5325 or sending an email to Joe.Samson@nass.usda.gov.



MSU launches new website for edible chestnut production

The Michigan State University (MSU) chestnut research and Extension program has launched a new website at www.chestnuts.msu.edu. The new site will serve as the clearinghouse for all chestnut-related research and outreach content produced by MSU. It will provide those in the chestnut industry with extensive resources for establishing orchards, horticultural care practices, managing insect pests and diseases, and harvesting and storage. The site also hosts information on the Rogers Reserve, the university's 100-acre endowed chestnut agricultural research facility located near Jackson.

Contact Dennis Fulbright at fulbrig1@msu.edu or Erin Lizotte at taylo548@msu.edu to share suggestions for improving the site or to submit event- or chestnut-related updates.



There's a new face on the block: meet Erin Lizotte, the new MSU Extension statewide integrated pest management educator

By Sara Long

Erin Lizotte may be a new face to some of the state's chestnut producers. The Michigan State University (MSU) Extension statewide integrated pest management educator will be supporting commercial growers out of her offices in Wexford and Missaukee counties. Her appointment commenced July 2012.

Erin, help growers get to know you a bit better. Tell us about your background.

I earned my Bachelor of Science degree in forestry from Michigan Tech and my Master of Science degree in plant pathology from MSU (tree fruit focus). The past four years I worked with fruit growers based out of the Northwest Michigan Horticultural Research Center near Suttons Bay. My research and Extension efforts have focused on developing and supporting the adoption of practices that increase crop efficiency and mitigate environmental impacts.

Tell us about your role with MSU Extension and how it engages with the state's chestnut industry.

My primary role will be to support the production side of the Michigan chestnut industry, specifically regarding horticultural and pest management education. I look forward to continuing to build on the strong partnership the industry has with MSU as we all work to shape the industry during this critical period.

What are you most looking forward to in this position?

I am looking forward to working with the dynamic group of growers and researchers who serve the chestnut industry. It's already clear to me that this is a group of passionate and committed individuals who are looking to develop a sustainable and profitable industry.

What are your goals over the next year?

I plan to increase the amount of MSU Extension resources available to the chestnut industry and learn all I can from our campus specialists and the state's chestnut producers.

What is the No. 1 thing you want to accomplish from working with Michigan chestnut growers?

My No. 1 goal is to help make chestnut production a profitable and sustainable endeavor for Michigan growers by addressing their educational needs.

Michigan chestnuts on YouTube

Dr. Dan Guyer was featured on the August 25 segment of the Michigan Farm and Garden Show. He was interviewed on chestnut production in Michigan as a prelude to the North American Chestnut Farm Workshop held near Jackson over Labor Day Weekend.

The Michigan Farm and Garden Show recently launched its own YouTube channel. The show segment featuring Dr. Guyer can be viewed by visiting <http://www.youtube.com/MiFarmandGarden>.



Erin Lizotte is the MSU Extension statewide integrated pest management educator. Photo provided courtesy of Melissa Bernhardt.

Why Michigan? Why chestnuts?

When we look at Michigan's litany of specialty crops, I believe chestnuts offer a unique opportunity for a low pesticide input and high value cropping system. Overall, chestnuts have relatively few pests and diseases of concern making them a potential rock star in the green, organic and local food movements. Additionally, the gluten-free market seems to be an exciting avenue with the ever-increasing number of gluten-free products becoming available on the market over the last few years.

I believe chestnuts are the sleeping giant, and the industry will need continued and consistent support to reach the tipping point and become one of the shining stars of Michigan agriculture in the coming decades.

What's coming up that people should know about?

I will be working with Dr. Fulbright on a couple of exciting programs this winter. We kicked things off by offering a session at the Great Lakes Fruit, Vegetable and Farm Market EXPO in early December, and then we'll be offering a chestnut component in the IPM Academy being held in Okemos in February.

Get social with the Rogers Reserve!

Stay abreast of the latest Michigan chestnut news and happenings by visiting the Rogers Reserve Facebook page and following Rogers Reserve on Twitter.

Join the conversation on Facebook at "Rogers Reserve at Michigan State University" and on Twitter @MiChestnuts.



Chestnuts roasting on a...CT scanner?

By Tom Oswald, Michigan State University Office of Communications and Brand Strategy

One bad chestnut may not spoil the whole bunch, but it can do a lot of damage to an industry's reputation, to say nothing of its business.

In an effort to make sure chestnuts make it to market in good condition, a team of Michigan State University (MSU) researchers are assessing the various imaging techniques currently available to develop a noninvasive method of detecting internal decay in the fruit.

"We can't destroy the product, so we are testing some of the same technologies that the medical world uses," said Daniel Guyer, MSU professor of biosystems and agricultural engineering who is leading the research team.

So far it appears that CT scans, as opposed to X-rays or MRIs or other techniques, work the best.

"X-rays look all the way through something, so you get a composite blurring effect," Guyer said. "An MRI is more expensive and is much slower in providing images. CT scans provide a more detailed, 3-D image quicker."

A CT – computerized tomography – combines a series of X-rays taken from different angles and computer processing to create cross-sectional images.

Guyer and his team are working with researchers across several disciplines to determine a method that can be used for not only chestnuts, but a host of other food items.



Chestnuts ready to be imaged on a computerized tomography scanner. Photo courtesy of the Department of Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering.

"The goal is to develop a system that will automatically sort the internal quality of things that we can't use current technology for," said Irwin Donis Gonzalez, a doctoral student working on the project. "We have to take what the human mind does in interpreting images and translate it into an algorithm to develop a reliable computer-based model."

In a perfect world, chestnuts and other foods are imaged at harvest time. Chestnuts, in particular, are important to get to early in the process, as they are perishable, similar to apples.

"If I sell you a pound of nuts and it's got one or two really bad ones in it, you're not going to be a return customer," Guyer said. "That's what we're trying to avoid."

Midwest Nut Producers Council President's Letter

This year's harvest was disappointing for some growers, but Michigan chestnuts fared pretty well compared to other fruit crops. Record harvests were even recorded at some chestnut orchards despite the year's frost events.

Chestnut roastings have been taking place all over Michigan this fall. The roasting at Lansing's Silver Bells in the City went well and was a successful fundraiser for the MNPC, thanks in part to the mild weather which drew increased attendance at the parade. We had many repeat customers at our post on the corner of Washtenaw and Washington streets and yours truly welcomed and wrangled in new customers to get their hot roasted chestnuts. Many people were snacking on roasted chestnuts and enjoying the seasonable weather at our roasting event during East Lansing's Winter Glow event and adding more dollars to MNPC's coffers.

Michigan State University (MSU) has launched a new website focused on chestnuts. Erin Lizotte, our MSU Extension educator specializing in chestnuts coordinated the production of this website. She put a lot of effort into identifying and compiling all of the research links, articles and pictures to upload onto the easy-to-navigate website. This new site will replace the Rogers Reserve site. Please take some time to check out the new website at www.chestnuts.msu.edu. You'll be glad you did!

The chestnut industry was well represented at this year's Great Lakes Fruit, Vegetable & Farm Market EXPO in Grand Rapids the first week of December.

The Expo attracts growers from all over the country. The

MSU Rogers Reserve had a trade show booth at the EXPO showcasing our value-added chestnut products. Seeing these products firsthand really helped growers better visualize potential sales from chestnuts. Information was readily available for those interested in establishing new chestnut orchards.

There was also a general interest session devoted to chestnuts at EXPO. Several fruit growers who had an interest in diversifying their farms attended Dr. Dennis Fulbright's presentation about maximizing chestnut production in Michigan orchards.

Erin Lizotte also spoke at this session, which focused on the integrated pest management aspect of chestnut orchards.

EXPO provided an opportunity for growers to see all the faces of the agricultural industry from financial institutions to seed growers to farm marketing and everything in between, whatever information you were looking for about farming, it was there. (I especially enjoyed the free ice cream with blueberry toppings!)

Even though the holidays are here once again, a farmer's work is never done. Spring is just around the corner. This is a good time to repair or replace your equipment and fertilizer orders need to be placed soon, too. Start sharpening the shears and get pruning!

All the best to you and yours!

Pete Ivory
MNPC President

North American Chestnut Farm Workshop welcomes attendees from 14 U.S. states and five countries

Chestnut growers and aficionados from 14 U.S. states and five countries took part in the North American Chestnut Farm Workshop held over Labor Day weekend near Jackson. International participants traveled from Australia, Canada, China, Italy and Turkey. Educational sessions took place at the Holiday Inn NW in Jackson, the Rogers Reserve research facility and Camp McGregor. Attendees also had an opportunity to tour orchards, field plots and processing facilities. The three-day event focused on learning best practices for growing and harvesting chestnuts and interactive discussions focused on further developing the chestnut industry.

The workshop was sponsored by the Ernie and Mabel Rogers Research Endowment at Michigan State University (MSU), the Midwest Nut Producers Council and Chestnut Growers of America.

To upload photos taken at the workshop, visit the Rogers Reserve Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Rogers-Reserve-at-Michigan-State-University>.



Selecting the harvesting method is a major consideration for any grower, and it should be one of the first ones a grower makes before establishing an orchard. Pictured is Dr. Dan Guyer (right of tractor) who is explaining how the harvesting machine owned by the Rogers Reserve operates. Attendees had an opportunity to learn about various harvesting options at the workshop.



Scenic views greeted workshop participants at Camp McGregor.



Co-owners of Tweenhills Chestnut Farm Dr. Heather Kane (right), President of Chestnut Australia, and John Kane (left) discuss the harvesting techniques demonstration at the Rogers Reserve.



Harvey Correia from Correia Chestnut Farms in California shared pointers about grafting, irrigating and managing Phytophthora.



The highlight for many attendees at the North American Chestnut Farm Workshop was having an opportunity to network with fellow producers and industry representatives from around the globe.



Dr. Umit Serdar, horticulture professor at the Ondokuz Maydis University in Turkey, delighted workshop attendees by bringing a variety of chestnut candies to sample.

Would you like a copy of the proceedings from the North American Chestnut Farm Workshop?

Proceedings from the North American Chestnut Farm Workshop will be available soon.

A printable PDF file will be posted on the new Michigan State University (MSU) chestnut research and Extension program website at www.chestnuts.msu.edu.

A copy can also be requested by sending an email to Dennis Fulbright at fulbrig1@msu.edu.

Missouri nursery offers chestnut material for Michigan chestnut growers

Forrest Keeling Nursery was established in 1948. The family-owned nursery based in Elsberry, Missouri, specializes in native plant material and has become a trusted source for chestnut material by Michigan's chestnut growers.

Dr. Dennis Fulbright shares the history of the relationship between Michigan's chestnut industry and Forrest Keeling Nursery....

In the mid-1990's, chestnut growers were scrambling to get trees from any source they could find. By the end of the 1990's and early 21st century, growers found they could rely on Fowler Nursery in California to provide them with grafted cultivars 'Colossal', 'Nevada' and 'Okei'.

'Colossal' trees were found to perform well under Michigan conditions, and today yields from these earlier plantings continue to increase. When Fowler Nursery decided to get out of the chestnut nursery business and focus solely on fruit tree nursery stock, however, both new growers and those wanting to expand acreage were faced with finding a source for trees.

Thanks to a tip from Greg Saffronoff of Traverse City, Michigan State University (MSU) chestnut researchers started following Forrest Keeling Nursery in Elsberry, Missouri. They discovered a professional nursery and staff members who were capable of handling large orders and willing to graft the cultivars known to produce well in Michigan. This meant that growers could begin to plant 'Colossal' again, but more importantly, it signaled that we could move on to using other cultivars with additional important characteristics.

Each year MSU sends nuts and scion wood to Forrest Keeling Nursery and they do the rest of the job. They establish rootstocks with vigorous, fibrous and healthy root systems; our selected cultivars are then grafted onto these rootstocks. The timing of this process meant that Michigan's chestnut industry would need to shift to fall planting.

Having only planted in the spring up to this time, Forrest Keeling provided some grafted and un-grafted trees to allow growers to conduct a year of fall planting tests. It turns out that fall planting has been just as good as, if not better than, the spring plantings.



Forrest Keeling Nursery is a large family-owned nursery business located in Elsberry, MO. The nursery business is a reputable source of chestnut plant material for Michigan growers.

Forrest Keeling had a lot of experience with planting young trees in the fall and knew the roots would become established during the fall and winter while the tree is dormant.

There are, however, four caveats to fall planting in Michigan.

1. *In Michigan, trees MUST be planted by mid-October, and the further north one goes, an earlier planting date is better.*
2. *If planting in September, the soil must be moist so that the trees do not dry out. Usually there will be enough moisture in October, but if it is dry, you must be able to moisten the soil.*
3. *It is best to mulch these trees. Mulching will keep the soil moist while providing insulation from the winter cold.*
4. *Put a tree/mouse guard on these young trees.*

A list of cultivars that should be considered for planting in Michigan can be found on the MSU chestnut website. Here are some key points to remember:

1. *Always plant grafted cultivars.*
2. *Never allow Chinese chestnut cultivars or seedlings to pollinize the European X Japanese hybrid trees because approximately 30 percent of the resulting nuts will decay from genetic incompatibility.*
3. *Never plant trees or bring trees or scion wood into Michigan from states with Asian gall wasp.*



Interest in chestnuts continues to grow, as evidenced by the success of the annual Great River Road Chestnut Roast.

Getting to know Forrest Keeling Nursery

By Sara Long

The Forrest Keeling Nursery may be a new name to some Michigan growers, so this month we're taking an in-depth look at how the relationship with the state's industry started and sharing their story with you. Following is an interview conducted with Kim Lovelace-Young, vice president and general manager of Forrest Keeling Nursery.

What is the history of Forrest Keeling Nursery?

Hugh Steavenson established Forrest Keeling Nursery in 1948. Wayne Lovelace, the current owner and CEO, started working for the nursery as a teenager in the early 1950's. After graduating from the University of Missouri, Wayne joined Forrest Keeling Nursery full-time and was key to the nursery becoming a premier grower for nearly seven decades. In 2004, Wayne and his family purchased the nursery from the Steavenson family. Wayne and his daughter Kim manage the day-to-day operations of the business.

Ongoing research is important.

Forrest Keeling Nursery has been producing specialty crop plants for many years and works with the Center for Agroforestry at the University of Missouri. Chinese chestnuts have been a research focus at the University of Missouri Horticulture and Agroforestry Research Center (HARC), so Forrest Keeling began production to support Missouri growers. It was a natural for Forrest Keeling to collaborate with Michigan State University and add the cultivars promoted through MSU to production. We are honored to be engaged by MSU to assist in establishing Michigan as a premier production region for chestnuts.



Forrest Keeling Nursery has grown a complete line of quality nursery stock ranging from native perennials to trees and shrubs and improved selections and cultivars for more than 60 years.

Why should Michigan growers heed advice to always plant grafted cultivars?

Clonal cultivars provide uniformity of size, taste, harvest and the quality necessary to satisfy market demand. Reliable production is essential to commercial orchardists.

What is different about Forrest Keeling Nursery and how it produces its plant material?

Forrest Keeling Nursery developed the patented 12-step growing process known as RPM® (Root Production Method). This process develops a fibrous root system that greatly enhances survivability, accelerates growth and promotes early fruit and nut production.

What should new chestnut growers keep in mind when purchasing plant material?

Order early because supplies are limited. We are working diligently with MSU to increase the availability of material for Michigan growers. To insure graft compatibility, it's necessary to graft to seedlings produced from seed collected from the individual cultivars. Bringing all of these elements together and producing grafted clones is time-consuming and costly, but the quality in the end is worth the investment.



It took more than two decades of field research to develop the Root Production Method®, a 12-step growing process patented by the Forrest Keeling Nursery.

Photos provided courtesy of Forrest Keeling Nursery.

Looking back, looking forward: chestnuts and the frost of 2012

By Dr. Dennis Fulbright

I think it's natural to look forward to spring with its renewal of growth and prospects for a promising growing season about to start up again. And then there is autumn when moods change and the days get shorter. The last of the summer harvests arrive and we give thanks for the foods we have harvested that will nourish our bodies for the long winter right around the corner.

Ok, stop right there! Cut! Let's rewind those 2012 tapes to last winter to review some of this. Remember the 2012 winter? It was easy to miss. It was one of the warmest winters in our short history of recording temperatures here in North America. It was bizarre, but who thought too much about it?

Then there was summer. Ah, yes, the summer with its "disc jockey" weather.

Only a disc jockey could like that weather – the radio comes on when the alarm rings and the disc jockey is marveling that "it's another glorious sunny day, so rise and shine!" That's right; it's another glorious day of 90-plus or maybe even 100-plus degrees with no prospect of rain. Only disc jockeys could like it. They probably don't have crops in the ground struggling through another "glorious day," one after another.

As you know, the growing season for most of the Midwest and other parts of North America was downright awful with record high temperatures and a record drought to boot. However, you should know that these extremes didn't occur everywhere. In some places, such as in the northern lower peninsula of Michigan, rainfall levels were higher than normal and the temperature extremes were not as extreme as what other places in North America experienced. In fact, northern Michigan truly had one "glorious day" after another.

Even with these glorious days, however, it wasn't a normal year for agricultural production in northern Michigan either. As Nikki Rothwell, coordinator of the Northwest Michigan Horticulture Research Station and Michigan State University (MSU) Extension educator, described it to Heather Johnson Durocher for the August issue of Traverse magazine, an "early-season warm-up and subsequent frost led to a significant crop loss."

The cherry crop defines northern lower Michigan, but this year its tart cherry production was only 8 percent of its normal harvest volume. It's true that corn and soybean production was decimated by the summer's heat and drought across the country, but in Michigan and other states bordering the Great Lakes, the major fruit crops – apples, tart cherries, sweet cherries, peaches, pawpaw and juice grapes – didn't even get a chance to be beaten down by the summer's heat and drought. They were all frosted out in April. Only a couple frosts of such significance have occurred in the past – in 1945 and 2002 – but those frosts didn't ruin as many other crops.

Tired of the doom and gloom? Want me to spin this into something good? Well, as they say in Michigan, the blueberries and wine grapes made it! But this is where I buried the headlines, because something else made it, too. It's a little

secret that just keeps getting bigger and bigger. Michigan's new chestnut industry made it through it all – it survived the frosts, the heat and the droughts. Yes, some farms were completely frosted out, but as a whole the industry made it. Enough chestnut orchards survived the frost and hence most of the customer demand should be met.

Two things occurred that made it possible for the chestnuts to survive these tough weather conditions. First, in southern Michigan where the frost was the worst because the warm weather prior to the frosty nights had coaxed many trees out of dormancy, the 'Colossal' chestnut trees (European X Japanese grafted hybrids) actually produced

"Michigan's new chestnut industry made it through it all – it survived the frosts, the heat and the droughts."

- Dr. Dennis Fulbright

female flowers on the lateral branches instead of on the terminal branches. This was amazing and something we had never seen before. When terminal buds or stems had been killed by frost in previous years, the lateral branches did not have female flowers – but this year they did. It did not happen with the Chinese chestnuts, however, but only with the European X Japanese hybrids. The nuts from Chinese chestnut trees will be a rare commodity on southern Michigan chestnut farms this year.

The second development that saved the industry in 2012 was that the frost did not hurt the chestnuts in the Traverse City area of northern Michigan. Cherries? Yes. Peaches? Yes. Heartnuts? Yes. Chestnuts? No. The frost did not harm the chestnut trees or flowers or nuts. The heat before the frost had not enticed the chestnut trees to push their buds early so they were not out and exposed at frost time. The frost had no power over the Chinese or 'Colossal' chestnuts as it did over other crops in the north. To make a long story shorter, Michigan had chestnuts; albeit the crop was down from the record high yields of 2011.

Let's hope for better growing conditions in 2013, but we will be ready for whatever nature throws at us.



Dr. Dennis Fulbright, professor in the Department of Plant, Soils and Microbial Sciences at MSU, says the chestnut may be a sleeping giant, one at which Michigan growers may want to take a second look. (Michigan State University photo)

Midwest Nut Producers Council Journal

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Sign-up for the Midwest Nut Producers Council Journal

Would you like to receive an email notice when the next issue of the Midwest Nut Producers Council Journal is published? Sign up at: <http://eepurl.com/mfyGz>. The Midwest Nut Producers Council publishes four digital issues per year.

Introductory instruction on chestnut production to be offered at Feb. IPM workshop in Okemos

An upcoming two-day program presented by Michigan State University (MSU) will offer introductory level instruction for those interested in chestnut production. The 2013 Integrated Pest Management Academy (IPMA13) is scheduled for Feb. 19-20 at the Okemos Conference Center in Okemos. The new program will also offer an in-depth workshop devoted to integrated pest management.

IPMA13 will examine the myriad weather challenges experienced during the 2012 production season. Dr. Jonathon Comstock from the Cornell University Department of Horticulture, a climate change expert and co-author of the agriculture and ecosystems chapters in the recently published [NY ClimAID Report](#), will address shifting weather patterns and their related impacts affecting agricultural producers. MSU experts are also on the workshop agenda. They will be discussing irrigation, frost protection and changing weather patterns in Michigan. On the second day of the workshop, participants may opt into two half-day sessions: apple and cherry IPM, deciduous tree IPM, scouting techniques for field crops and forages, and vegetable IPM.

The afternoon session topics will include: MSU resources for hops, Saskatoon berries and chestnuts, conifer IPM, emerging issues in field crop pesticide resistance, IPM in small fruit crops, and vegetable IPM. The cost to register for IPMA13 is \$225, which includes snacks, lunch and parking. Workshop participants will receive a notebook with program materials and an IPM MSU Extension bulletin. Michigan pesticide recertification credits will be available. The price of lodging is not included in the registration cost, but special rates are available. [Registration](#) is open Dec. 3 through Feb. 12. Space is limited.

For more information about the workshop or to request a paper registration form, contact Erin Lizotte at 231-944-6504 or taylor548@msu.edu. IPMA13 was developed with funding support from the U.S. Department of Agriculture – National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA-NIFA) Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program.

Feb. 19 – 20 – 2013 Integrated Pest Management Academy (IPMA13)
Okemos, Mich.

March 19 – Michigan Ag Day at the Capitol

May 17-19 – Chestnut Growers of America annual meeting
Alachua, Florida

July 16-18 – Ag Expo, Michigan's Farm Show

October – 2nd European Chestnut Meeting
Hungary

Oct. 13-19 – National Chestnut Week

Nov. 15 – Silver Bells in the City chestnut roast
Downtown Lansing

Nov. 16 - Autumnfest: College of Agriculture & Natural Resources Tailgate Chestnut Roast

MSU Pavilion for Agriculture and Livestock Education, East Lansing

Dec. 10-12 – Great Lakes Fruit, Vegetable and Farm Market EXPO and Michigan Greenhouse Growers Expo

DeVos Place Convention Center and the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel, Grand Rapids

COMING UP