

Trees: Trying to restore 'mighty giants'

From Page A1

backcross-breeds of the American chestnut and Chinese chestnut tree in hopes of eventually creating American Chestnut seed stock that has only one gene from its Chinese ancestor: resistance to chestnut blight.

Clark's current crop of chestnuts are four generations removed from the 50 percent American and 50 percent Chinese chestnut.

Their genetic composition is about seven-eighths American chestnut.

The backcross breeding is done by pollinating the Chinese chestnut with the American chestnut, planting the seeds and growing trees. These young trees are inoculated with the chestnut blight and the weakest, least blight-resistant trees are culled.

The American chestnut mother tree is then pollinated from the most

■ The backcross breeding is done by pollinating the Chinese chestnut with the American chestnut.

blight-resistant hybrids and the process is repeated, until a seed is produced that can be planted to grow blight-resistant American chestnut trees.

Clark has set aside a 2-acre orchard for chestnut trees to speed up a process that might take hundreds of years, if left to evolution.

About two years ago, Clark inoculated about 600 trees with the blight, and of those, only 25 were left standing. The other trees were either killed by the blight or were culled because they did not show levels of resistance.

The healthy survivors are cross-

bred again, the new seeds are nurtured into seedlings or planted as seeds. When they mature, they are inoculated with the blight and thinned out.

"We have 600 to 700 trees now," says Clark. "There were 1,200 trees before I started thinning them out. I set out 120 to 130 trees this spring. About last year, we (planted) 300 to 350."

The difference between American and Chinese chestnut trees, he explained, is that the Chinese chestnut was bred and cultivated for hundreds of years to be a food source. He said this blight-resistant chestnut resembles a bush more than a tree and is not used for timber.

Besides being a primary food source for wildlife, the American chestnut tree also produced fine, sturdy lumber.

"Loggers tell of loading entire railroad cars with boards cut from

just one tree," says an American Chestnut Foundation pamphlet that Clark hands out.

"I joined the foundation in 2002, and we started the orchard in 2003, in Hawley," said Clark, a seventh-generation farmer in this region.

Clark grew up on his Apple Valley farm and first learned about the American chestnut decimation when he was in college. About 27 years ago, while living in Minnesota, Clark learned about a group of growers in Michigan who were working to restore the chestnut. He moved back to Ashfield after his retirement from IBM in 2007.

Clark said their are seven different family "lines," with seeds coming from different mother trees.

"Now we are doing open pollination. This summer, they blossomed and cross-pollinated each other to produce this generation."

Clark said "it's not clear" that the American chestnut could ever evolve a natural resistance to the blight.

"There are still hundreds of stump sprouts in the woods. But, because a

(chestnut) tree doesn't self-pollinate, you have to have two trees in close proximity. Sprouts may even grow up before they get knocked down by the blight again," he explained. "There isn't any chance for the evolution to happen, to develop resistance for these populations. And there are other things that kill chestnut."

This summer, Smith College agreed to a 30-year commitment to produce an American chestnut "seed orchard" on part of 240-acre MacLeish Field Station land.

Seed orchards are designed to produce seeds of better quality than those that can be produced naturally. Clark said the Foundation would like to recruit more growers to help with the seed orchard project.

For more information, go online to the American Chestnut Foundation website:

www.acf.org

You can reach Diane Broncaccio at: dbronc@recorder.com or 413-772-0261, ext. 277

Lobby: In Mass.

From Page A1

Massachusetts.

In 2005, there were just over 800 lobbyists registered with the state. By 2012, that number had soared to more than 1,600, according to an Associated Press review of lobbying records filed with the state secretary's office.

That's eight lobbyists for each member of the Legislature.

In part, the increase is due to a change in the definition of a lobbyist. The broadened definition, prompted by a 2009 ethics law, forced many individuals who had avoided the label to officially register.

The increase is also recognition of the extraordinary level of lobbying in Massachusetts, according to state Secretary William Galvin, whose office oversees lobbyists.

"It's a native species that flourishes here very well," Galvin said.

Lobbyists are quick to defend their work, saying they're not only helping make sure the voices of their clients are heard, but in many cases are helping educate lawmakers on topics or areas where they may have little expertise.

One way lobbyists seek the attention of lawmakers is to donate directly to their campaigns.

In 2005, lobbyists contributed about \$943,540 to the campaigns of lawmakers and candidates, according to the AP review.

That's an even more impressive total considering that, by law, lobbyists can't contribute more than \$200 each year to an individual lawmaker or candidate. In 2005, that translated into nearly 6,500 individual donations of varying amounts.

By 2012, the total donated by lobbyists to lawmakers topped \$1.2 million, or about 8,200 individual donations.

And direct donations to lawmakers are only the tip of the lobbying iceberg considering the total amount spent on the industry in Massachusetts, a modest-sized state with a full time Legislature and a reputation for ambitious lawmaking.

In 2012, the total amount spent on lobbyists' salaries and on related expenses like meals, entertainment and transportation topped \$118 million, up from the \$71 million spent in 2005.

That's far more than the total budget for the operations of the entire Massachusetts Legislature — just over \$61 million for the just-completed fiscal year.

Galvin said what makes the amount spent on lobbying even more unusual is the relatively few major bills that pass each session.

"The question that arises is what are these people doing?" he said. "Are they being paid to prevent bills from becoming law?"

The donations from lob-

byists to lawmakers appear to have peaked in 2010, when the total neared \$1.4 million, or more than 9,300 individual donations.

That was also the year of some of the fiercest political wrangling over a bill to allow casino gambling in Massachusetts.

While the bill was signed in 2011, an earlier version collapsed midway in 2010 despite a concerted push by supporters. After the defeat, backers immediately began pushing for a new, compromise bill.

The overall pace of lobbying doesn't show any signs of letting up. Midway through 2013, lobbyists had contributed more than \$788,000, according to Galvin's office.

Two of the biggest targets of lobbyist's political contributions are the two most powerful members of the Legislature, House Speaker Robert DeLeo and Senate President Therese Murray.

In 2012, DeLeo received about \$47,910 in donations from lobbyists, while Murray received about \$48,170.

DeLeo and Murray have said donations from lobbyists don't affect their political decision-making.

Gov. Deval Patrick, who has announced he would not seek a third term, received about \$5,350 in donations from lobbyists last year.

Former Lt. Gov. Timothy Murray, who resigned earlier this year, but in 2012 was considered a possible front-runner in the 2014 governor's race, pulled in about \$24,550 from lobbyists.

Martha Coakley, who is considering a run for governor, collected about \$13,460, while state Treasurer Steven Grossman, who has announced his candidacy, received about \$5,225.

But some of the biggest targets remain in the Legislature, especially lawmakers responsible for crafting the House and Senate versions of the state budget, essentially deciding what will and won't be funded with taxpayer dollars.

Senate Ways and Means Chairman Stephen Brewer received about \$15,535 from lobbyists last year, while his counterpart, House Ways and Means Chairman Brian Dempsey collected about \$32,050.

It's not just the number of lobbyists that has risen over the years.

The number of clients — all those companies, organizations or individuals who hire lobbyists to convey their messages to lawmakers — has also climbed from 1,055 in 2005 to 1,368 in 2012.

At the same time, the number of firms engaged in lobbying in Massachusetts has also ticked up from 128 in 2005 to 205 last year. In some cases an entity and an individual lobbyist overlap if the lobbyist is also head of the lobbying firm.

Supper

From Page A6

eating bugs and grubs; and the eggs are fantastic, the way they should be."

Firefly Farm eggs were among those boiled and chopped by the Hope and Olive restaurant's staff and volunteers to create an egg salad, one of 15 dishes prepared for the feast.

The Greenfield restaurant closed for the day to cook the meal, turning the donations from 54 farms and businesses, large and small, into dishes including curried chicken salad with paneer, lamb and pepper tagine, kapusta and braised greens.

At the front of a line stretching clear around the common two dozen volunteers laded out the various dishes while others shuttled food from the prep station in the back of a Foster's Super Market refrigerated truck.

"Things are going great. There were a lot of little last-minute glitches but everything got ironed out," said Community Action food pantry coordinator Dino Schnelle, also a member of the eight-member organizing committee. "Lots of great music and even though the farmers are stressed by the (unusual) weather we've been having, we have an incredible amount of really incredible food."

Waiting time in line reached



People begin to sit down to eat while others wait in line at the Free Harvest Supper in Greenfield on Sunday.

Recorder/Trish Crapo

close to an hour for many, but several pointed to the line as the best part.

"It's very fun to be in line you talk to everyone," said Christine Ainsworth of Deerfield, seated with daughter April Greene, grandson Carter Greene and several other acquaintances met by chance.

The line offered food praised by all at the table, bubbles and crayons for children and the opportunity to see people she hadn't seen in a long time, Ainsworth said.

The line circled the musicians' stage, and plates of cheese and fruit hors d'oeuvres made the rounds while they lasted.

"What's so much fun is to see everybody, see all your friends, people you wouldn't see outside of school or



Recorder/Paul Franz

Pinnie Sears and Billye Davis of Montague donate chicken eggs to the Free Harvest Supper in Greenfield.

work," said Rachel Masson of Greenfield. "And there's food."

Masson sat with a group of three, not counting toddlers, who knew one another through day care.

Asked about the egg salad, Masson pointed out it had been cleaned from all their plates.

For Davis, the Harvest Supper typifies the spirit of the area, where she says everyone chips in when neighbors need it, mostly behind the scenes.

"That's why we do the eggs, just because it's a community thing, and how do you have a Free Harvest Supper if no one donates?" Davis said.

Organizers reported that 950 diners were fed at this year's supper, and that \$1,900 was raised by the event but they were still counting the donations.

A volunteer offers tomatoes to people waiting in line at the Greenfield Free Harvest Supper. The annual event, held for the ninth time, took place on Court Square and the Town Common.



Recorder/Trish Crapo

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2 injured in jet ski explosion on Lake Winnepesaukee in NH

Associated Press

MOULTONBOROUGH, N.H. — A man and his 8-year-old passenger have suffered injuries after their jet ski exploded and they were thrown into Lake Winnepesaukee.

The state Marine Patrol says 56-year-old Steven Mitton of Andover, Mass., suffered a broken pelvis in the accident around 1:45 p.m. Sunday. His

passenger suffered a cut on her head. They were taken to a local hospital for treatment.

WMUR-TV reports the girl is Mitton's niece and that they were in a jet ski at the lake.

"It was very loud. I say it sounded like a stick of dynamite exploding," said Tom Casale, of the Deepwood Lodge Homeowners Association, told WMUR.

The accident is being investigated.