



AMERICAN CHESTNUT

Species at Risk

In Canada, the American Chestnut (*Castanea dentata*) occurs in Ontario and is the only species of Chestnut that is native. This species is endangered and is at risk of no longer existing anywhere in Canada.

The American Chestnut is a fast growing tree that can reach heights of 30 to 45 metres and up to 3 metres in diameter. This tree has alternate, simple, smooth, elongate leaves that taper at both ends. The leaves are 14 to 20 centimeters long and 7 to 10 centimeters wide and have widely spaced saw-teeth on the edges. The bark is light to dark grey-brown, with flat ridges and shallow fissures. There are two or three furry, round, brown nuts found within a very sharp, prickly burr.

The American Chestnut prefers upland areas with sandy soil, mainly in rich deciduous forests. This tree is often found with red oak, black cherry, sugar maple and beech.

The major threat to the American Chestnut is Chestnut blight. When this blight was first introduced to North America it killed off more than 95% of all American Chestnut trees in approximately 30 years. Other threats include hybridization with exotic species of Chestnuts and habitat destruction.

It is illegal to search for, harass or capture a species at risk or destroy their habitat.

Pictures courtesy of Rob Tervo

References: COSEWIC 2004. COSEWIC assessment and status report on the American chestnut *Castanea dentata* in Canada. Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada. Ottawa. vi + 19 pp.

