

Chestnuts

Planting Information



- 30-40' tall
- Will take 3-5 years for nut production
- Varieties: Peach, Qing, Homestead
- Require well drained soil to prevent fungal diseases
- Chestnuts grow in barbed pods that could be a hazard
- Native North American species were wiped out due to Chestnut Blight, but Asian varieties and hybrids can thrive
- The nuts need to be roasted prior to eating
- Chestnuts are one of the most expensive nuts in the world!

Common Pests and Diseases

Other diseases or pests may be present, but these are the ones most commonly found in St. Louis.

Yellow Neck Caterpillar: Insects that defoliate chestnut trees, special danger to young trees
Treatment: Bt inclusion in holistic spray, Bt sprays

Chestnut Weevils: Small insects that lay eggs in the nuts, larvae eat through the nut as they hatch
Treatment: Harvest nuts promptly, if weevils are present, boil nuts at 122°F for 30 min to kill the eggs before the hatch

Seed St. Louis Recorded Classes and Resources

Holistic Sprays - Recipes and ingredients available to Giving Grove projects

Bacillus thuringiensis (Bt) - Available for purchase from our Store

Orchard Classes - Summer Pruning, Dormant Fruit Tree Planting, Pest and Disease Management, and Harvest. Available on our YouTube channel.

Companion plant recommendations - Handout available on website

How to Eat

Chestnuts have a high water content and need to be eaten immediately after harvest or stored in the fridge (not freezer). Chestnuts are best enjoyed fresh and roasted, or used as an ingredient in baking or classic Italian dishes! To roast chestnuts, score the outside of the nut and roast until the layers peel back, revealing the nut inside. Chestnuts can also be used to make a gluten free flour.

Timeline of Care

Spring Care

- Application of four holistic sprays (liquid fish, pure neem oil, effective microbes) every few weeks once leaves start emerging and ending once nut burrs have formed (Late February to Mid-June)
- Remove any tree wraps placed in winter (Early April)

Fall Care

- Chestnuts will fall off of the tree when ripe, around the start of fall, begin to look for the fallen nuts. Frequent harvesting ensures fresh chestnuts and also prevents pest issues (September to November)
- Remove nuts from spiky burrs and refrigerate (not freeze) as soon as possible to preserve freshness
- Remove or shred all fallen leaves and spiky burs to prevent diseases from spreading (Mid-October to November)
- Fifth holistic spray once all leaves have been disposed of (November)
- Install tree wraps to protect trees from rabbits and voles (Late November)
- Apply a new layer of mulch to the base of the tree (November)

Ongoing Care

- During the first full growing season, water 5 gallons per plant per week, with the exception of weeks with substantial rain. After the first year, trees only need to be watered during droughts
- Weed the mulch ring
- Plant any desired companion plants to benefit the orchard ecosystem (Spring or Fall)