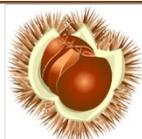


Chestnut Industry News

A collaborative communication from the Midwest Chestnut Producers Council in partnership with Chestnut Growers, Inc. and Michigan State University.



MIDWEST CHESTNUT
PRODUCERS COUNCIL

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Fellow Chestnut Growers:

The world has changed much in the last few weeks; it feels so long ago that we were planning for the annual meeting. It appears the MCPC board made a good decision to cancel the meeting at the last minute; KBS was very understanding and I'm thankful for their support and also for your understanding as we navigate this new experience together (but distantly). As the pandemic plays out, it appears that it will take much time to get back to whatever a new 'normal' will be. As appropriate, we will begin planning events once again. I hope to see you all as soon as safely possible.

As you well know, the annual meeting is a time to share our collective knowledge as chestnut growers and hear from our chestnut research team members at MSU. To continue in our effort as the research and education non-profit arm of the chestnut industry, MCPC is enthusiastically supportive of the efforts Erin Lizotte has made to begin a [webinar series](#) during the growing season. Please make sure you visit www.chestnuts.msu.edu and keep up-to-date on virtual events to keep our community engaged and informed.

A huge thank you to those of you that have paid your dues for 2020! The value of our education and research efforts must continue and MCPC will continue to help fund some research at MSU that benefits us as a whole. If you have not paid your 2020 dues, please consider doing so. Your membership dollars get used wisely to help support some critical research and (when the time is right again) to plan and host meetings for learning and interacting with growers from across the region.

One of the things I'm most excited about is reviving a newsletter to our grower-members in collaboration and cooperation with CGI and MSU. The MCPC board unanimously voted to begin this important communication strategy after a hiatus for nearly a decade. We hope to slowly implement grower articles, grower innovations, research reporting, ideas, etc. If you have things you think should be included, be sure to contact Erin Lizotte or me. Newsletters take time, dedication, and useful content and I trust we can all use this time wisely to implement such an important tool for growers, both new and experienced. Please note, items in orange and underlined are clickable hyperlinks to lead you to more information.

The spring and summer season hold many unknowns but I join you in hoping for a growing season amenable for good chestnut growth and production. There are still things that need to be done in all of our orchards to make them successful far into the future; this may be the year we get more small projects completed with some of the extra time on our hands.

Take care, stay healthy, and see you soon,
Josh Springer
MCPC President



Dear Chestnut Growers,

I hope you are all staying safe and you, your families and friends are all healthy. COVID-19 has had a major impact on all of our lives. Hopefully, the situation is temporary, and life will become normal again.

Chestnuts will still be an important specialty crop in Michigan. I had hoped to see you all at the MCPC annual meeting in March and hear about some important topics regarding chestnuts, but this was cancelled due to the pandemic. Several of the topics addressed the challenges encountered with growing chestnuts and the important work MSU and grower collaborators are working together to help solve the problems with grant-funded research. To ensure we don't miss out on this info, Erin Lizotte has developed a series of [Lunchtime Chestnut Webinars](#) to share the information we were supposed to hear at the annual meeting. The first webinar is scheduled to begin Wednesday April 29, 2020 at noon. Please plan on [registering](#) to view these webinars live or watch the recording at your convenience. The topic during the first week will focus on chestnut weevil management and the [2020 Michigan Chestnut Management Guide](#).

This newsletter is the beginning of a regular communication from MCPC, CGI and MSU to help improve communications within our chestnut industry. MCPC, CGI and MSU are working together to support all Michigan chestnut growers to grow and market the best quality chestnuts. As growers, we need to support each other and share all the information we can to make the chestnut industry strong.

Best Regards,
Roger Blackwell
President, CGI

Protecting yourself and your farm employees from COVID-19

Bruce MacKellar, Philip Kaatz, Paul Gross, Stan Moore, Kevin Gould and Beth Ferry, [Michigan State University Extension](#) - March 27, 2020

Agricultural operations are part of the national food production and distribution system and deemed critical to the United States infrastructure. Because livestock operations are on-going and crop, along with fruit and vegetable, operations will be ramping up activities in the next few weeks, it is vital to find ways to help reduce your farming operations exposure to COVID-19, the infectious disease caused by novel coronavirus. The following considerations are ways to reduce the risk of spreading the virus while protecting your farming operation during this critical spring season.

Employee management

Your family and your employees are critical to you and the success of your operation. Therefore, it is imperative that everyone monitor their own health. Isolating yourself if you become sick is only the first step at reducing risk of transmission in your operation. Make plans to reduce the impact on employees missing work so that they make responsible health decisions. This can be done by reviewing your employee sick day or absentee policies and communicating any changes or adjustments made for this situation.

Practice social distancing. Examples of this include staggering lunch breaks, rotating shifts to reduce the number of people present at the operation and reevaluating tasks that require multiple people to be in close proximity to each other (less than 6 feet between employees).

Set up additional hand washing stations in areas that make sense for your operation. Ask employees to sanitize their hands and other touch points between tasks, prior to breaks or lunch periods.

Provide methods to disinfect equipment and supplies, especially those that are shared between employees. Suggestions include keeping spray bottles of disinfectant handy in tractors, vehicles,

etc. and providing a way for employees to sanitize their hands when moving between buildings, rooms, vehicles and equipment. Remember to include a garbage bag or place to throw away contaminated materials, such as gloves or wipes, within easy reach that can easily be removed at the end of each shift or task.

Focus on becoming a better communicator or trainer from a distance. Use cell phones, written instructions, etc. to outline instructions that can help get the job done right with less human to human contact. If your farm moves operations to shifts, utilize a physical or virtual message board to communicate what tasks have been completed and what needs to be done.

Considerations for operation management

Bring in feed, seed and fertilizer as soon as you can safely store or apply it. As long as the supply chain transportation system keeps working, long-term supply issues are not expected for production agriculture inputs.

Limit your exposure to other people. Work with your agribusinesses to schedule pickup and drop-off of rental equipment by phone.

Inquire with suppliers about what can be done to protect both their employees and your operation. Curbside pick-up of parts or delivery to a specific location on your farm may be reasonable options. Care should also be taken to order parts/supplies over the phone when possible. You might want to learn more about how to access parts diagrams on the computer if you normally consult with staff at the parts counter to determine what is needed.

Complete frequent sterilization of surfaces that are regularly used by more than one person according to [CDC recommendations on products and contact time](#).

Utilize standard operating procedure (SOPs) for your operation so that if you happen to become sick, work can continue as needed. If family members or an employee are responsible for specific tasks, have each person write down their

activities along with any timeline necessary for payments, reporting, purchasing, etc.

If you provide employee housing, it is important that you and your staff have a contingency plan in place for alternative housing or cleaning and disinfection processes so that your operation can continue on a normal schedule.

While you can't completely eliminate the risk of becoming ill from viruses, these steps will help lower the risk to you and your employees. Many of the principles of biosecurity and food safety are also relevant to reduce the spread of human born illnesses. One excellent site for food safety information can be found at the [Michigan State University Extension Agrifood Safety website](#).

During these unprecedented times, people may experience mental clutter during their everyday activities. Safety is critical and should be prioritized on every operation. Allowing people time to express their thoughts or process current events is important so they can complete their task safely and without distraction.

Staying abreast of this rapidly changing situation is difficult. To stay informed, go to the following websites.

General information on COVID-19

[CDC – Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

- [The New York Times – The Coronavirus Outbreak](#)

Information specific to agricultural labor

[H-2A Visa Program](#) from U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)

- [Comprehensive and Updated FAQs For Employers on the COVID-19 Coronavirus](#) from Fisher Phillips
- [Covid-19 OPM Guidance](#) from National Association of Agriculture Employees (NAAE)

Information on cleaning personal protection equipment (PPE)

[CDC – Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Recommendations](#)

Online review now available for private pesticide applicators 🦋

Monica Jean and Christina Curell, Michigan State University Extension

Private pesticide applicators looking to take the verbal test with MDARD now have access to an online review with Michigan State University Extension.

Last week, the [Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development](#) (MDARD) announced that oral testing would be available for private pesticide applicators:

“To help ensure Michigan’s private pesticide applicators (farmers applying restricted use pesticides on their own land or crops) are in compliance with the law, MDARD is offering renewing and new private applicators the ability to receive Michigan private applicator certification via oral interview by phone. Please be advised that the department is not able to offer this option for commercial applicators at this time.”

“The interview will consist of multiple choice and/or true and false questions based on content from the National Pesticide Applicator Certification Core Manual. Questions will be read by an MDARD representative, applicants must respond orally and obtain at least a 70% score to pass. This opportunity can only be offered for the private applicator Core exam. To schedule an oral interview, contact Lisa Graves by phone at 517-284-5653 or by email at GravesL@Michigan.gov.”

In response to that, [Michigan State University Extension](#) has created an [online review for the private applicators](#) to take prior to the test. The webinar is 4 hours and 18 minutes long and follows the core manual chapters. To purchase the Michigan Pesticide Applicator Core Manual, visit the [National Pesticide Safety Education Center](#) website.

Please contact [Christina Curell](#) or [Monica Jean](#) with any questions or concerns.

Michigan Chestnut Weevil Management 🦋

Erin Lizotte, Michigan State University Extension



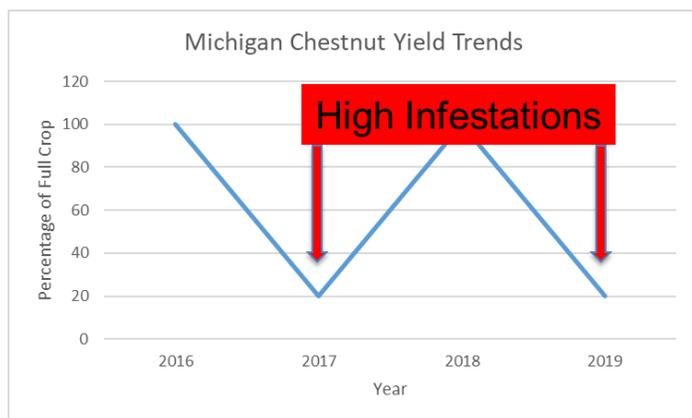
Chestnut weevil with damaged kernel. Erin Lizotte, MSU

The most important insect pest of chestnut in the central-eastern United States is the lesser chestnut weevil (*Curculio sayi*). Large chestnut weevil (*C. caryatipes*) is also an important pest, but is less prevalent. Large and lesser chestnut weevil are native to North America and are host-specific, only infesting tree species in the genus *Castanea* (American chestnut, Chinese chestnut, European chestnut and chinquapin). Large and lesser chestnut weevil both lay eggs on developing nuts, with developing larvae feeding on and compromising the kernel. If left unchecked, the larvae can infest and destroy the nuts. Larvae can be present at harvest resulting in “wormy” nuts making their way to consumers.

Over the last few years, Michigan chestnut producers have reported an increase in the number of larvae in nuts at harvest. It is likely that the observed larvae are immature chestnut weevils, though the exact weevil species has not been identified. As an emerging issue, Michigan producers have had very little experience with chestnut weevil and no formal research has been done on this pest in Michigan. However, based on field observations in Michigan and research out of Kentucky and Missouri, we can make some

educated estimations about chestnut weevil biology and management in Michigan.

During the years of 2017 and 2019, some farms experienced high levels of weevil infestation at harvest. Some of the affected orchards were heavily infested, while other farms have effectively no larvae in nuts at harvest. At this time, chestnut weevil populations appear to be localized and cyclic in Michigan, with higher infestation percentages coinciding with low-yield crop years, which generally occur on a biannual basis.



Low yield appears to be associated with a high percentage of nut infestation. Erin Lizotte, MSU.

For the complete management recommendations for 2020, review the MSUE article, [Managing Chestnut Weevil in Michigan 2020](#).



From the Orchard...

Josh Springer, MCPC President

With what appears to be an upcoming spring and summer with some additional 'free time' I wanted to share how I plan to use some of that time to improve my chestnut orchards. I also wanted to share some of my 'lessons learned' which may or may not apply to your situation; each of us has a slightly different approach and our diversity of opinions makes our industry better.

This is now my sixth growing season with chestnut trees in the ground—time flies! I have found that over the few years I've been lax in getting some small

projects done while normally just doing the big things: mowing, spraying for insect pests, and harvesting the slowly increasing yield each fall.

Now that [pruning](#) season is essentially over for chestnut, I only expect to prune damaged branches from storms, accidental tractor interaction, etc. I have removed the white spiral tree guards from my oldest trees and most of the oldest trees no longer need staking. Adjusting stakes and ties on smaller trees is something I can do when walking the rows scouting for insects or doing other tasks. This season I plan to inspect for blight on trees. As trees age, gain more surface area, and more branch points, more potential cracks can allow blight spores to infect trees. Blight remains an important challenge, but it can and should be managed.

For those of you on the edge of the [Asian Chestnut Gall Wasp](#) range this is also a good time of year to look for galls from last year and also, as trees begin to grow, scout for new wasp infestations. I also plan to spend some time inspecting [irrigation](#) lines for damage and leaks, blown-out emitters, change emitter location, etc. This is certainly something that doesn't get as much attention as I think it deserves. Fertilizing through my irrigation lines will expand this year to the larger orchard in Charlevoix county and that will be a huge time saver!

One additional item on the agenda for me is to continue to work on updating my orchard maps; a critical piece of data for not just me but anyone who may take over my orchard someday in the future. Knowing the trees in my orchard gives me a good way to track total numbers of cultivars, which are producing well, which are infected with blight (I fully expect to have blight in the future), and can allow me to answer orchard census questions thus helping CGI and our entire industry project into the future.

There are certainly other things you may plan to do at your place and this is only a snapshot of the high points of what I expect to complete. I hope you're able to stay healthy, safe, and productive this growing season!

If you'd like to contribute to this section by sharing your farmer insight in the future, please feel free to [contact me](#).

Events and Resources

NEW! [Chestnut Lunchtime Webinar Series](#) April 29-August 26 2020. Registration required.

[MCPC Website and Registration](#)

[Chestnut Growers, Inc. Website](#)

[MSU Chestnut Website](#)

NEW! [2020 Michigan Chestnut Management Guide](#) free download.

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