**Horse Mountain Farm Frequently Asked Questions**

**Is Horse Mountain Farm open to the public?**

Yes, by appointment. Please call 540-691-5740 to set up an appointment. Visitor hours are normally scheduled on Fridays, Saturdays, or Sundays in the Spring and Fall. If you have a large order, please call by the Wednesday prior to your pick-up date to allow us time to have your order pulled and ready for you.

**Do Dunstan Chestnuts require pollinators?**

Yes, all chestnuts need pollinators. You must plant a minimum of 2 Dunstan trees together to get nut production, while 4-5 together is better.

**Will other chestnuts (such as Chinese) pollinate Dunstan Chestnuts?**

Yes, but the nut production will not be as good.

**How similar are the Dunstan Chestnuts to the American Chestnut?**

Dunstan Chestnuts are blight resistant, which American Chestnuts are not. They produce larger nuts than American Chestnuts. If grown in the open, Dunstan Chestnuts will spread (just like American Chestnuts).

**What is the best site selection?**

Pick a location with good soil drainage and good air flow such as on the top or side of a hill to avoid frost pockets where cold air or late frosts settle at the bottoms of valleys. Avoid areas with soil that stays saturated for long period of time, such as creek bottoms.

**What type of soil?**

Chestnuts prefer a well drained, sandy loam with a pH of 5 – 6.5 but will grow in other soils. Avoid heavy clay and wet soils with a high water table or that stay saturated for long period of time. If the land is already supporting large oak and hickory trees naturally, it should be good for chestnuts.

**Should I put compost or peat moss in the hole when planting?**

No, this can cause root fungus. Put the native soil or topsoil back in the hole and do not amend with compost, peat moss or manure (which can burn the roots).

**What is the range of Dunstan Chestnuts?**

They will grow from Zones 5-9 (see USDA hardiness zone map). They need at least 250 chill hours. Established trees will withstand temperatures down to -20F.

**Do Dunstan Chestnuts bear nuts every year?**

Yes, chestnuts bear every year. If they experience a late freeze in the Spring after leaf-out, or early Fall freeze before the nuts ripen, the nuts or tree growth can be damaged.

**Can we select our own trees?**

Yes, you can select your own trees from the hoop house. You’ll need to call ahead and make an appointment.

**Do you offer a guarantee?**

No, we do not offer an unconditional guarantee. We guarantee that the trees are true to type and are in good condition when they leave the nursery per Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services requirements. Our guarantee does not include unconditional replacement. If you experience a problem with a tree later in the growing season, let us know as soon as possible. We will be fair and will do our best to keep you satisfied. Plants are living organisms and require care. The customer is responsible for the growth and survival once the tree leaves our nursery. We have extensive planting guides to assist with your questions.

**Do you sell wholesale?**

No. We do offer quantity discounts and bulk ordering.

**When is the best time to plant trees?**

March – May and August – September are good planting seasons. Fall planting is good because the trees root into the ground as long as the ground is not frozen. They’ll come out in the Spring with less shock. See our planting instructions for more information.

**How far apart should I space the trees?**

Chestnuts should be planted 30-40’ apart. Chestnuts bear on the outer growth each year, so maximizing sunlight around the tree increases overall nut production.

**How soon will I get nuts?**

Chestnuts will begin to bear 3-5 years after planting. You should not allow a tree to overbear when it is young, so remove some fruit if the crop appears too heavy, or it will stunt the growth of the tree.

**When should I fertilize?**

If trees are established, apply fertilizer in the Spring around the tree on top of the soil, and half again after Summer rains have started. Don’t fertilize in the late Summer or Fall, as this could lead to vigorous growth and damage from early frosts. Scotts Osmocote, Triple 12, or a similar fertilizer with a broad spectrum of micro-nutrients is best. If in doubt about the need to fertilize and what type of fertilizer, your local extension agent can analyze your soil and determine the best fertilizer regime for continued growth.

**Do I need irrigation?**

Water is the single most important element in tree survival. We highly recommend installing an irrigation system. Infrequent watering from a hose is not enough, especially in the first year of growth. If you are planting in the woods where there is no water, we strongly suggest you use Grow Tubes and supplement with regular watering.

**How often should I water?**

You must water the trees in thoroughly at transplanting, preferably 2-3X/week the first year. In woodland plantings, if the trees are not getting regular (1-2X/week) rains, you will need to provide additional water.

**Should I use Grow Tubes?**

Grow Tubes act like mini-greenhouses, recycling moisture from leaf transpiration to nurture young seedling growth. They also protect the trees from animal damage and herbicide over-spray. Grow Tubes need a stake to keep the tube upright. Leave them on the trees until the trunks outgrow the tubes.

**Staking?**

If your tree comes with a stake, keep the stake on the tree for its first season, checking often to make sure any ties or strapping are not girdling the tree. After that time, the tree should be stable enough to remove the stake.

**Frost protection?**

In the event that you experience a late Spring frost after your trees have leafed out, wrap the tree with freeze cloth (available a garden centers) or even an old sheet. This can provide effective protection in the event of light frosts only. Do not use plastic or tarps as frost protection.

**Should I use weed mats?**

Yes, it is very important to protect young trees from weeds – they compete with the roots for water and nutrients. Weed mats are very helpful in eliminating weed competition.

**What is the best way to protect against damage from deer?**

We suggest building a cage with t-bar posts and 5’ concrete reinforcing wire at least 3’ in diameter. If you have a lot of pressure from deer, it is the best method and protects your investment in the trees.

**Do I need to spray my trees?**

No. Contact your local extension agent if you see signs of bug damage, and they can help you identify the pest and give recommendations for safe, environmentally friendly treatment.

**What % success rate should I get?**

With an irrigation system, you should get 80-90% or better survival. If you plant them in the woods, it depends on how much rain and care they get after planting. If you do not water, and it is a dry year, your success rate could go down considerably.

**How do you prune Dunstan Chestnuts?**

Chestnuts are grown in a central leader form, with the main trunk growing straight and branching beginning high enough off the ground to be able to mow underneath. The trees grow in this pattern naturally, but some limited pruning may be necessary. Do not over prune – they are not like peach trees that require annual heavy pruning. Never remove more than 1/3 of the tree any year. Remember chestnuts bear on the outer growth each year. Prune when the tree is dormant. You should prune: suckers, waterspouts, weak v-crotches, cross limbs, vertical growth, stubs, broken and dead branches, double leaders. Pruning should begin the first year after transplanting and take place gradually over the next few years. After you get your tree into the shape you want, all you need to do is maintain it. This can be done pretty quickly with a winter pruning.