

Field and Forest

The other day, I was walking along a road near my house and saw a tree blown down, cut and pushed off the road. It looked odd, I couldn't identify it. A couple of days later, I drove my truck down to pick up the logs and realized they were American chestnut.

The American chestnut has long been considered extinct, killed by a blight. But a few continue to come up from stumps and grow. About a mile away (in another direction) stands the 2nd biggest American chestnut surviving in the state of Tennessee, 19 inches in diameter. Or rather it was. I just visited this tree for the first time and found it dead. Majestic, straight up itn the sky in the middle of the woods. But such trees can succumb any time to one of a hundred strains of the blight that abound in our forests.

While it was a sadness to see it, several groups of dedicated citizens have worked long to bring this tree back, by breeding and backcrossing a single genetic change which protects the tree. These improved trees will soon be available for wider planting.

—Sandy Hepler

This short has been provided courtesy of the Green Living Journal, a project of the Center for Holistic Ecology and the Cumberland Green Bioregional Council.

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It was chilly this spring but there was enough sun that, when our fruit trees flowered, we had oodles of insects buzzing around. To judge by the results two months later, they did a great job of pollinating.

Among these many types of bugs, we saw plenty of honeybees. We find this heartening, considering recent news of the disappearance of bees from many hives. We are quite sure there are no hives within several miles of us, nor have there been any for years.

Our happy theory is that bees just finally got tired of "working for the Man" and figured they could find better homes in the woods. Fifteen years ago, our own bees (in hives) were decimated by the varroa mite, but maybe the survivors regrouped in nearby trees and have continued to befriend us ever since.

—Sandy Hepler

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