



Bruce Wakeland and Steve on Volunteer Day with rows of chestnut seedlings in the background.

## Helping the American Chestnut Foundation Bring Back a Legend

The Indiana Chapter of the *American Chestnut Foundation* is planting a chestnut tree seed orchard at the *Potawatami State Park* in Tippecanoe, Indiana. Banks Hardwoods donated \$2,500 to help cover

the cost of fencing to keep deer from damaging the orchard.

The *American Chestnut Foundation (TACF)* is an organization dedicated to

restoring the great American chestnut as a viable, productive hardwood species, as it once was before a blight, first introduced in 1904, wiped it out. This species

was once one of the most important and dominant species in the eastern United States. It was known for its decay resistance, beauty and excellent millwork qualities. Many of the early American barns, cabins and buildings were made of chestnut and still stand today. As some of these buildings have become obsolete the beams and lumber from them have become highly desirable and are being recycled for use in new homes as flooring and millwork.

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Bruce Wakeland, a true "Man of the Earth", heads out with his hammer.

## Spencer Lutz Promoted to President

Spencer Lutz began his career with Banks Hardwoods in June of 1989 helping construct kilns and piling boards on the green chain. Upon earning his grading certificate in Memphis, he graded lumber for several years before being promoted to plant manager at the Mottville location in 1992. During that time he also became proficient in operating dry kilns and learned the basics of buying green lumber.



In 1994, Spencer transferred to our newest division in Menomonie, Wisconsin and took on the task of hiring, training and managing the new manufacturing team. Once Menomonie production was running smoothly, he tried his hand in sales where he continuously set company sales records.

With Spencer's instrumental role in the Wisconsin Division's success, he returned to Mottville serving as Sales Manager for the company and was again promoted in 2004 to Vice President.

Spencer has managed all these outstanding career accomplishments while raising four wonderful children with his wife Peggy.

As President, he will take over the day to day operations of the company while working with the Executive Committee. We offer Spencer our sincere congratulations and wish him well as he takes on this great challenge.



A “block” of 120 new seedlings start their long journey inside the seed orchard.



A group of volunteers install a section of the Banks Hardwoods sponsored deer fence.

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This year marks the 25th anniversary of TACF. For those 25 years scientists have been working diligently to produce a blight resistant strain of the chestnut. In 2005 the first blight resistant nuts were harvested. Now, new seed orchards are being planted in 14 states – the true beginning of a reforestation process that TACF hopes to achieve before the end of this decade. Prior to these orchard experiments, most of the genetic research had been done on a national level in Meadowview, Virginia.

Each orchard will contain 60

“blocks” of 120 seedlings planted within a three acre parcel of land. The trees will be allowed to grow for three or four years or until they can produce nuts (seeds) which will be collected for examination and additional breeding experiments. Once the trees have begun to produce nuts, the chestnut blight will be introduced into the orchard to try to affect these seedlings. At some point the foresters will select the very best tree from each of the 60 plots and pull the rest, leaving only 60 of the hardiest of the original 7,200 trees to continue to grow in the orchard. Nuts will then be harvested from those 60 superior trees to produce new seedlings and the process will repeat itself until scientists feel they have developed a strain that will stand up to the blight. Reforestation on a mass scale can then begin!

TACF is well on its way to returning what was long ago one of our most important hardwood species to the hardwood lumber market. We hope that more companies in the hardwood lumber industry will get behind this program. With much support and hard work, it’s only a matter of time before the Chestnut will once again grace the American landscape. A big thanks to TACF and all of its volunteers!

For more information on TACF and how you can help, visit [www.acf.org](http://www.acf.org) or call 802-447-0110.

## Celebrating 15 Years at Banks

After graduating from Michigan State with an accounting degree, *Dana Kennedy* joined Banks May 25th, 1993. Dana soon found out though we were small, there wasn’t much moss growing on our rolling stone. She has always produced high quality accurate work with a smile.

*Mike Middleton* approached us with his lawn care business over fifteen years ago looking for work. One thing led to another and Mike was off to Memphis, working his way through various departments before eventually becoming the manager of our value added business. Mike has always demonstrated a strong desire to improve whatever he lays his hands on and has taken our value added business to the next level.

Steve Banks and *Vern Neff*, a farmer at the time, met while the first Banks kilns were being built in South Milford, Indiana back in 1987. “The engineer in overalls” and a legend within our business, Vern has had a hand in almost every large capital expansion since then.

*Robert Meachum* started with Banks Hardwoods on May 13th, 1993 and has worn many hats since then. Robert’s current job responsibilities include tallying orders at Quantum, setting up daily production runs, driving forklift, and calibrating the saws. He is a key factor in the success of our Quantum facility.

Congratulations to all our 15 year veterans. They are a testament to the long-term, consistent dedication that make *Quality Everything* at Banks Hardwoods a reality.

 **Banks  
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