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NO. 1 SOURCE FOR NEWS IN WALKER COUNTY

Officials hope to spawn blight-resistant hybrid chestnuts with Walker County tree

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Tim Carlfeldt

Members of the Georgia Chapter of the American Chestnut Foundation worked on pollinating a rare specimen last Saturday in Walker County.

"This is the first time this has ever happened in the state of Georgia," said Donald Davis with the foundation, referring to a bona fide blooming chestnut ready to be pollinated.

The 35-foot tree is on the farm property of Carl Meyer, located off Lake Howard Road not far from LaFayette.

The American chestnut fell victim to fungus blight from Asia beginning in New York in the early 1900s.

By 1940 most chestnuts had died from it, as the blight had progressed southward at a rate of 50 miles per year.

Davis, a professor at Dalton State College said, "My guess is that it won't live much more than four or five more years. It has signs of blight in a few small areas."

He says the pollen is from blight-resistant hybrid chestnuts developed at the Meadowview Research Farm in West Virginia.

"The offspring of this pollination will be state-of-the-art chestnut trees," he said. "Not all of the nuts will have the blight-resistant gene."

According to Davis, these trees will be tested after three to four years of growth to see if they have developed resistance.



Don Davis pollinates a female flower on an American chestnut with pollen from a different species, in hopes of creating a hybrid immune to the chestnut blight. (Messenger photo/Ken Caruthers)

