



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Rachel May

Senator Rachel May Awards ESF Professors for Groundbreaking Research on American Chestnut Tree

DAN MESSINEO November 2, 2023

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Senator Rachel May (Syracuse, Cayuga County) recognizes Dr. Charles Maynard and Dr. William Powell with the New York State Commendation Award for their groundbreaking research and work to repopulate the American Chestnut tree.

The American Chestnut once dominated the eastern part of the country. Then, a fungus from Asia would go on to kill over 3 billion chestnut trees within a few decades. Doctors Powell and Maynard’s initial research of the American Chestnut’s “functional extinction”

turned into a decades-long project to restore the majestic tree. The American Chestnut Research and Restoration Project at ESF hopes to continue restoration of the tree after completion of the regulatory process.

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Senator Rachel May - “We recognize Dr. Charles Maynard and Dr. William Powell today for their work to bring back the American Chestnut tree. With their innovative and forward-looking project, they will enhance the lives of generations to come. As these trees thrive and restore our forest, they will give life and habitat to numerous species, and we will enjoy their beauty and the many other benefits they’ll bring. Congratulations on your accomplishments, and it’s an honor to present you with the New York State Commendation Award.”

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ESF President Joanie Mahoney - “We are exceptionally proud of the work Doctors Powell and Maynard have done to restore the American chestnut tree to the landscape. Their work is a testament to the power of science, perseverance, and a deep commitment to preserving the natural beauty of our world. We congratulate them on being honored with the New York State Senate Commendation Award, recognizing their outstanding contributions to the restoration of a cherished part of our shared heritage.”

Dr. Andrew Newhouse, director of The American Chestnut Research and Restoration Project, accepted the award for Dr. William Powell. Linda McGuigan, tissue culture lab manager for the project, accepted the award for Dr. Charles Maynard.

The American chestnut tree had various uses, serving as both a food source and traditional medicine for Native Americans, with its nuts being a significant economic resource in North America, often roasted and sold during the Christmas season. Additionally, the tree's wood was highly prized, known for its straight grain, strength, and resistance to decay, making it valuable for furniture, fences, construction, and various wood products. At the same time,

tannins from its bark were used in leather tanning. Notably, "wormy" chestnut wood, featuring insect damage from blight-killed trees, became popular for its rustic character.