

**Dream takes root**  
**Chestnut group president visits White House**  
*By Sabina Haskell, Herald Staff*

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**President George W. Bush, Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns, center, and Marshal Case, President and CEO of American Chestnut Foundation, plant an American chestnut tree on the North Lawn of the White House to commemorate Arbor Day Friday, April 29, 2005.**

**White House photo by Eric Draper**

WASHINGTON — When Marshal Case of Shaftsbury, Vt., last visited the White House 15 years ago, it was to deliver the signatures of 1 million children in honor of the 20th anniversary of Earth Day. Friday's visit to the White House was even more significant, he said. After watching President Bush plant a 16-foot American chestnut tree in honor of National Arbor Day, Case called it the beginning of "the greatest environmental achievement of this century."

For Case, who is president of the American Chestnut Foundation headquartered in Bennington, Vt., it was a crowning

achievement: Nearly once extinct, his beloved chestnut is healthy again and gracing the White House's North Lawn.

"This is a tremendous day for us," he said. "This is a big thing. Every president plants a species of tree historically. The American chestnut is President Bush's tree."

In a private meeting with the president before the ceremonial planting, Case said, they talked about trees — with Bush telling Case about the 16,000 trees he had planted at his Texas ranch.

"I thanked him for having the foresight to focus on the value of the American chestnut," Case said, adding that the tree is good for the economy and the environment.

President Bush echoed that sentiment later. "This is our little part to help it come back," Bush told reporters. "Our message is to our fellow citizens: Plant trees — it's good for the economy and it's good for the environment."

Case was ecstatic. "He's made a statement today. It's not just a tree. It's a tree that has a huge potential."

The tree planted Friday came from a research farm in Virginia, where blight resistance was bred into the native chestnut with the help of the Chinese chestnut.

The American chestnut, prized for its timber and its crop of glossy dark nuts, once dominated Eastern forests from Maine to Georgia. The graceful trees were virtually wiped out by blight starting at the turn of the 20th century.

That loss, Case said, "was the greatest environmental disaster in the Western Hemisphere since the Ice Age."

Now, after years of breeding, cloning and crossbreeding, the U.S. Department of Agriculture is ready to reintroduce disease-resistant chestnuts to Eastern forests next year.

Case says the chestnut is also poised for a comeback that could



reclaim the scarred face of closed coal mines. It can also absorb carbons released into the air by fuel-fired plants in the Midwest, he said.

"This is a major accomplishment," Case said. "(The president) is to be given a round of applause — that this is a help to the environment. There's no question about it."

The Associated Press contributed to this story.

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## President Plants a TACF Chestnut Tree at White House in Honor of Arbor Day

Photo courtesy USDA Associate Forest Service Chief Sally Collins

**April 29, 2005**

**President Bush, Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns, and TACF President & CEO Marshal Case at the Arbor Day Ceremony.**

Photo courtesy The White House



Not only was this a wonderful day for chestnut, it was a wonderful day for the environment — in the same week, the ivory billed woodpecker, a bird that once benefited from chestnut trees, was discovered in Arkansas, and removed from the extinct species list. My hopes are that the chestnut, and the ivory billed woodpecker, will once again become strong species rather than rare sights

— Marshal Case

Read A Note from Vermont Gov. Jim Douglas

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
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MONTPELIER, VERMONT 05609



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MARSHAL -  
CONGRATULATIONS!  
THANKS FOR RAISING AWARENESS OF  
THE AMERICAN CHESTNUT & THE IMPORTANCE  
OF PLANTING TREES.  
HOPE TO SEE YOU SOON -  
JIM DOUGLAS