

Copy

The University of Southern California
Naval Reserve Officers' Training Corps
University Park, Los Angeles 7, California

20 November, 1943.

Mr. J. L. Bedwell, Pathologist,
Bureau of Plant Industry,
U.S. Dept. of Agriculture,
Portland, Oregon.

Dear Sir:

I am replying to your letter of 4 November addressed to my son, R. E. Kerr, Jr., regarding chestnut propagation. My son has been absent since the summer of 1940 on active duty in the navy. I have been away since the spring of 1942, and a succession of help on the ranch has made it impossible to keep complete, accurate records. However, I was able to visit the ranch for two days in October of this year and I can give you some general, if not exact, information. The planting diagram and records are there, but my present hired man is better in caring for the trees than he is in interpreting records.

In general, the original trees did not grow very vigorously and many of them died back to the roots several times. About ten per cent, as an estimate, were planted on land a few feet lower than the rest. Those planted on the slightly lower ground eventually died. (The farm is Willamette silt loam in the general flood plain of the Willamette.) The surviving trees, about 60, I believe, are commencing to shape up like trees. Their slowness in getting established is probably not due to diseases or lack of hardiness but rather to their unsuitability to the Willamette or Chehalis type of soil. So far as I know, there has been no chestnut blight. But the trees are very susceptible to slight injury.

The trees that were grafted when originally received seemed to show no evidence of uncongeniality of scion and stock. One or two of them may have failed from damage from the silver thaw in 1942 or from the heavy snow last winter. I am inclined to think they are still all there, as grafted trees.

hm The grafts (buds) in 1939 were, I believe, all failures.

Only one tree has yet fruited. It was a *pumila x crenata*. This year it had four burrs. The burrs opened but the nuts did not fall clear. The nuts were much of a size and on the order of the ordinary American chestnut. Their quality was about the same, though the sample was too small for definite determination. No estimate can be made of its productivity yet, nor can any opinion be formed on the other trees for the present. When conditions permit us to get back on the ranch we probably can give you more effective cooperation.

Very truly yours,

/s/ R. E. Kerr

R.E. Kerr, Commander U. S. Navy