

# News Release

## The Eastern Ontario Butternut Recovery Story

October 22, 2013 — The Butternut is a lovely native tree with a wide distribution in central and eastern United States reaching its northern limits in southern Ontario, southern Quebec and New Brunswick. They have co-existed with other trees in the forests of Eastern Ontario for thousands of years. Now, Butternuts everywhere are under attack by the Butternut Canker Disease. This deadly fungal disease attacks all Butternuts regardless of size or age and there is no known cure. Trees slowly lose vigour, branches start dying and thin black sooty patches appear on the bark. Butternut is classified as an endangered species by both the provincial and federal governments.

Is there anything we can do? Fortunately, some individual Butternut trees seem to be more tolerant than others, just as some people appear to be naturally more resistant to human illnesses than others. From this simple observation, several groups have developed a Butternut Recovery Program to try and avoid the extinction of one of our most beautiful trees. The Forest Gene Conservation Association, the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority and hundreds of concerned landowners and environmental groups in Eastern Ontario are now into year 8 of the Eastern Ontario Butternut Recovery Program.

The basic plan consists of finding and mapping tolerant Butternuts, checking the DNA to avoid hybrids, collecting seeds and then growing healthy seedlings at the Ferguson Forest Centre in Kemptville for out-planting on properties all over the region. The partners also collect scions (small branch cuttings) from the healthiest trees to graft onto walnut rootstock and grow in protected archives with the ultimate goal of producing vigorous, new Butternut seedlings for re-introduction into Ontario's forests.

The results are starting to come in. Trained Butternut Health Assessors have visited 836 properties across Eastern Ontario (by invitation of the property owners) searching for healthy Butternut trees; they have documented 14,677 live Butternuts of which 452 were assessed as pure, possibly genetically-tolerant trees for seed collection; they have collected 54,500 Butternut seeds from healthy trees since 2010, and grown and out-planted 14,605 seedlings on 1,450 different properties thanks to our generous landowners. In addition, the Butternut Program Recovery partners have 94 Butternut grafts growing in the Kemptville Archive and have participated in Butternut research projects with other forest institutes in Canada and the United States.

The early results of Butternut recovery are encouraging. The health and vigour of the out-planted Butternuts will be monitored in the years ahead to see how many show disease tolerance in the next generation. Research on immature seed collection, artificial propagation of multiple healthy trees from one embryo, and long-term preservation of healthy embryos is also encouraging.

"Butternut Tree, A Landowner's Guide" written by the Butternut Recovery Partners including the Forest Gene Conservation Association is an excellent easy-reading source of more information on this interesting native tree. It is available for downloading free of charge by typing Butternut Landowners Guide into your browser.

You will also find Butternut stories, results and pictures on the RVCA website at [www.rvca.ca](http://www.rvca.ca) <<http://www.rvca.ca>> ; click on "Protecting Our Land" on the left-hand side, and then on Butternut Recovery Program under Index.

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