



Butternut Recovery Program



Rideau Valley Conservation Authority

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Butternut canker disease has infected most of the butternut trees across the entire North American range. This fungal disease has been found on more than 95 percent of the butternut trees examined in eastern Ontario. There is no known cure for butternut canker disease, but some trees may be resistant to the disease just as some people are more resistant to colds than others.

Rideau Valley Conservation Authority is working with the Forest Gene Conservation Association and the Butternut Recovery Team to build a strong butternut recovery program across southern Ontario. With the help of numerous partners including the Government of Canada Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk, the Ontario Species at Risk Stewardship Fund, Ferguson Forest Center, Stewardship Councils and Conservation Authorities, local landowners are helping to find, monitor and plant healthy butternuts through a regional Butternut Recovery Program. Landowners are reporting butternut trees found in their backyards, fence lines and woodlots. Conservation Authority staff then assess each tree for overall health and potential canker resistance. If the tree is healthy and has minimal to no canker infection, it is added to a database and mapped for future seed collection. Thousands of seeds are collected each year from select healthy parent trees to produce 2,000 vigorous seedlings that are in turn planted throughout eastern Ontario to replace the dead and dying butternut. As many seeds as possible are collected from the canker free trees in the hope that they could provide genetic resistance to the fungus and be used to produce canker resistant stock for future planting. Trees

that are showing signs of canker resistance are monitored each year to ensure they haven't become infected.

So far, over 380 healthy trees have been found and recorded as potential seed sources for future seed collection. Twenty-five of these trees show signs of resistance to the canker disease. Leaf samples have been sent to the Ontario Forest Research Institute for DNA testing to determine whether these 25 are hybrids or pure butternut species trees. Preliminary results suggest that 12 of the 25 are pure butternut. Plans are underway to save the genetics of these resistant trees through a long-term grafting program.

Small batches of seedlings are planted by interested landowners all across eastern Ontario in the hope of re-establishing the population. Over 4,000 butternut seedlings have been planted since 2006.

The Butternut Recovery Program is working to:

- Inform and educate landowners about butternut canker.
- Locate, assess and map mature healthy butternut trees with landowner help.
- Collect seeds from healthy parent trees and grow vigorous seedlings to replace butternut loss.
- Plant and monitor butternut seedlings on public and private sites throughout eastern Ontario.
- Assess the status of canker free trees every year.
- Work closely with the national and provincial Butternut Recovery Teams and other recovery efforts across Ontario.



Most of the land in eastern Ontario is privately owned so the involvement of concerned landowners is critical to the success of the program.



... If all the landowners would co-operate, we may just be able to save a Canadian Heritage Tree.

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