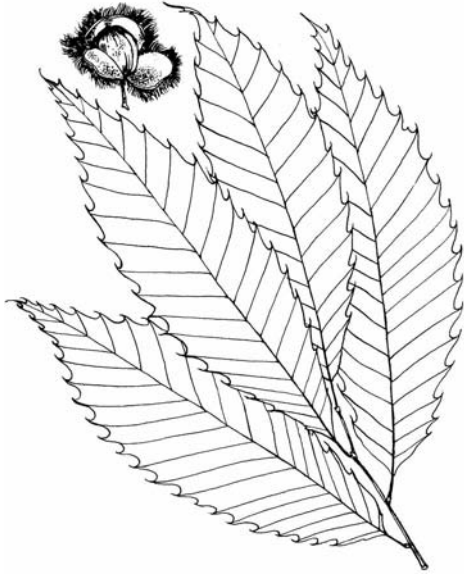


AMERICAN CHESTNUT

Castanea dentata (Marsh.) Borkh.

Most of the chestnut trees in Maine have been destroyed by the chestnut blight fungus, *Endothia parasitica*. There are national efforts underway to develop blight resistant trees of this once very important tree species. The natural range of American chestnut only extended into southern and central portions of the state and now



occurs infrequently, usually as sprout growth, in the southern half of the state on rich, well-drained soil. It has been planted occasionally as far north as Bangor. The tree grows rapidly. In the forest, it has a tall, straight trunk free of limbs, and a small head. When not crowded, the trunk divides into three or four limbs and forms a low, broad top. It reaches a height of 60-70 feet and a diameter of 15-30 inches. The **bark** on the trunk of old trees is dark brown and divided into broad, flat ridges by shallow, irregular fissures. On young stems, it is smooth and dark gray with a green tinge. The **leaves** are coarsely toothed and hooked, with the leaf margin between the teeth rounded. Leaves are alternate, 5-8 inches long, yellow-green, and smooth on both surfaces. The **fruit** is a

prickly bur, containing 2-3 nuts tipped with hairs. The inner lining of the bur is plush-like. The **nuts** contain a sweet meat and were once gathered in large quantities for the market. The **wood** is soft, very durable, strong and splits easily. It is used for interior finishing and was (prior to the blight) in much demand for telephone poles, railroad ties and fence posts. The durability of the wood is due to the tannic acid which it contains.