

## Chinquapin <sup>[1]</sup>

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## Chinquapin

by David Southern, 2006



Chinquapin with unripe husks.

Image from Flickr user Lydiat.

<sup>[2]</sup>Chinquapin, or "chinkapin," is a diminutive cousin of the American chestnut. Although their name derives from eastern-dwelling Algonquian Indian <sup>[3]</sup> language, chinquapin trees are known as far west as Texas, and several species exist. In North Carolina the principal chinquapin tree, *Castanea pumila* <sup>[4]</sup>, occurs in the Piedmont and Mountain regions. Small and shrublike in nature and often with several trunks, a chinquapin seldom grows above 20 to 30 feet in height. The wood of chestnuts and chinquapins is extremely rot resistant and has been used in making railroad <sup>[5]</sup> ties and posts and rails for fences <sup>[6]</sup>. The occasional split-rail zigzag fences along the Blue Ridge Parkway <sup>[7]</sup> are fashioned mostly from these trees.

Chinquapin husks contain a single kernel that, when ripe in the fall, is a tasty foodstuff for humans as well as animals. Kemp P. Battle, the president of the University of North Carolina <sup>[8]</sup> from 1876 to 1891, remarked that there were two local delicacies that students dependably would raid: scuppernong grapes <sup>[9]</sup> and chinquapins. In his day a convenient grove of chinquapins stood near the intersection of Columbia and Franklin Streets, main corners of modern-day Chapel Hill. In the early 1950s it was possible to buy a bag of chinquapins at roadside stands in hilly, rural North Carolina counties such as Stokes <sup>[10]</sup> and Surry <sup>[11]</sup>. The bag was approximately the same size as a bag of peanuts sold at a ball game and usually cost a nickel. At the end of the decade the price had increased to a quarter a bag, if one could find them for sale at all.

### References:

William C. Coker and Henry R. Totten, *Trees of the Southeastern States, including Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Northern Florida* (1934).

J. S. Holmes, *Common Forest Trees of North Carolina: A Pocket Manual*(rev. ed., 1995).

### Additional Resources:

"Alleghany chinkapin." Virginia Tech Dept. of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation. 2012. <http://dendro.cnre.vt.edu/dendrology/syllabus/factsheet.cfm?ID=24> <sup>[4]</sup> (accessed October 17, 2012).

Holmes, J. S. "Chinkapin." *Common forest trees of North Carolina: a pocket manual* North Carolina Dept. of Environment and Natural Resources, Division of Forest Resources. 2002. p. 37. <http://digital.ncdcr.gov/u/?p249901coll22.223689> <sup>[12]</sup> (accessed October 17, 2012).

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[Food and drink](#) [13]

[Plants](#) [14]

[UNC Press](#) [15]

[Wildlife](#) [16]

**Authors:**

[Southern, David](#) [17]

**Origin - location:**

[Mountains](#) [18]

[Surry County](#) [19]

[Piedmont](#) [20]

[University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill](#) [21]

[Stokes County](#) [22]

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1 January 2006 | Southern, David

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[11] <https://ncpedia.org/geography/surry>

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[14] <https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/plant>

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