

Chinquapin ^[1]

Chinquapin

by David Southern, 2006



Chinquapin with unripe husks.

Image from Flickr user Lydiat. ^[2]Chinquapin, or "chinkapin," is a diminutive cousin of the American chestnut. Although their name derives from eastern-dwelling Algonquian Indian ^[3] language, chinquapin trees are known as far west as Texas, and several species exist. In North Carolina the principal chinquapin tree, *Castanea pumila* ^[4], 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 ^[5] ties and posts and rails for fences ^[6]. The occasional split-rail zigzag fences along the Blue Ridge Parkway ^[7] 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 ^[8] from 1876 to 1891, remarked that there were two local delicacies that students dependably would raid: scuppernong grapes ^[9] 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 ^[10] and Surry ^[11]. 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> ^[4] (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. <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/common-forest-trees-of-north-carolina-a-pocket-manual/3280111?item=3285085> ^[12] (accessed October 17, 2012).

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Subjects:

Food and drink ^[13]

Plants ^[14]

Wildlife ^[15]

Authors:

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Origin - location:

Mountains ^[17]

Surry County ^[18]

Piedmont ^[19]

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill ^[20]

Stokes County ^[21]

From:

Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press. ^[22]

1 January 2006 | Southern, David

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