

# The South River Current



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*Promoting interest and collaboration for watershed stewardship*

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*Workers planting a native tree during riverbank restoration near the wastewater treatment plant.*

## River Restoration: Save Some Seeds

What is a Box Elder? A Hackberry? How about a Black Walnut or American Sycamore? That's right, they are all tree species, and all these native species grow along the banks of the South River. The South River Science Team was careful to preserve and plant native species while restoring the riverbanks. As residents, you can help preserve and restore these native tree species too. The Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF) needs seeds and acorns from the trees listed below. Over the summer months, learn to recognize these species and then identify and collect the seeds and acorns in September and October. When collecting seeds and acorns, follow the detailed

instructions [here](#) and bring them to the nearest VDOF office by October 16th. You will play a part in preserving our trees!

- Black Oak
- Black Walnut
- Chinese Chestnut
- Chestnut Oak
- Live Oak
- Northern Red Oak
- Pin Oak
- Sawtooth Oak
- Southern Red Oak
- Swamp Chestnut Oak
- Swamp White Oak
- White Oak
- Willow Oak



## Did You Know?

- Virginia timber is harvested for hardwood sawtimber, pulpwood, woodchips, and railroad ties.
- The [American Chestnut Foundation](#) was founded in 1983 to restore the iconic tree back to its native range.
- Hackberries, as seen in this photo, have a thin, very sweet purple skin surrounding a crunchy shell with a tiny nut inside. They have been consumed by humans for ages and are one of the first known foods that humans ate and stored.



*Mountain Lumber Company installed the flooring in this home.*

## Connections: Reclaiming Wood in Our Neighborhood

The 1970s slogan, “reduce, reuse, recycle,” is still inspiring people over five decades later. What was once “old” is now rebranded as “vintage.” Home renovation shows feature hosts repurposing found materials, furniture, and even old pieces of wood.

This approach isn’t new to Mountain Lumber Company in Waynesboro – they’ve been reclaiming wood for decades, traveling the globe searching for rare and beautiful wood in abandoned unused structures. Every piece of reclaimed wood the company mills is hand selected because of its richness in history, character, and beauty. Then, experienced craftsmen de-nail, saw, and kiln dry every board, leaving nothing to waste. They even burn the dust they generate to produce energy to run their kilns and heat their facilities.

The company’s dedication to reusing and repurposing started long before HGTV. In 1974, Willie Drake, the founder of Mountain Lumber Company, took an assignment that led him to West Virginia in search of rare American Chestnut wood among the area’s historic Appalachian barns. While combing the mountains for usable wood, Willie realized an abundance of beautiful, abandoned wood was waiting to be reclaimed and reused. Thus, Mountain Lumber Company was born. Click [here](#) to find out more about the company’s environmentally conscious production or visit them at 200 West 12th Street.



Canker damage from fungus on an American Chestnut;  
picture from [Joseph OBrien, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org](#)

## Take a Walk Back: The Plight of the American Chestnut

When you hear the word “hybrid,” do you think of cars or recent school schedules? Another use of the word - hybrid plants - has been around for over a century. Back in 1882, 1,000 Japanese Chestnut trees (*Castanea crenata*) were sent to a New Jersey nursery. The shipped Asian trees stopped growing at about 40 feet, while chestnut trees native to America grew to 80 to 100 feet. Growers decided to fuse the two—a hybrid—in the hope of growing an American Chestnut that would be easier to harvest. Unfortunately, chestnut trees and chestnuts imported to both American coasts carried a foreign fungus that attacked adult chestnut trees (*Cryphonectria parasitica*). The fungus was first identified at the Bronx Zoo in 1904. It spread to Northern Virginia in 10 years and through the Blue Ridge Mountains by 1925. Between three and four billion mature American Chestnuts died. By 1950, nearly all mature chestnut trees across the Eastern United States were dead. However, millions of young chestnut tree sprouts are growing in Virginia woods. Many American Chestnut trees survive to maturity because they have been planted outside their normal range, away from the fungus. Foresters are planning to restore the American Chestnut by developing a blight-resistant strain so they can plant new strands in the old historic range. To read more about the plight of the American Chestnut in Virginia click [here](#).

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