

The American Chestnut Blight

The American Chestnut

Location:

Age: Sapling

Materials:

- Pencil
- Paper

The American Chestnut, a tall tree, has dark brown bark which cracks with age. Its leaves have long points and jagged sides. As the trees mature, their leaves become green and smooth-edged. However, the population of the American chestnut has diminished over the years as a result of a terrible blight, leaving the species endangered. The death of so many trees also led to the death of many animals which relied on the tree for food. The chain of survival was altered with the American Chestnut blight. However, of the few American Chestnuts remaining, Saint Michael's College is lucky enough to actually have one on campus.

Do you know any other endangered species? What can you do to help such species? Why are trees so important for the environment and how do we use trees in everyday life?

Activity:

Read *Tell Me Tree* by Gail Gibbons. Pay close attention to what a tree needs to survive and the importance trees serve to humans. Then, write a letter to Mother Nature. Explain the problem with the American chestnut tree and ask for her help. Make sure to include the importance of trees to the environment, the animals, and the people. Offer her suggestions on how you think you may be able to help the tree and other endangered species.

This activity will get kids actively thinking about their environment and different ways to help conserve it. They will learn several important facts about the American chestnut and should find it fascinating that such a rare tree lives in their community. The children will then be given the opportunity to work on their literacy skills by expressing themselves creatively through a letter.