

## Planting Chestnut Seeds

Chestnut trees grow quite well if nuts are planted outdoors in the spot where you want the tree to grow. They develop a better root system than transplanted seedlings and grow more rapidly. In late winter or early spring, dig a 3-inch-diameter hole with a bulb planter and fill it with a moist mix of 1/3 each ground-milled peat moss, vermiculite & perlite (moisten with 1 pint of water to 1.5 gallons of moss (1:10 v/v); mix well). Pack the mix in with moderate pressure. Plant the nut about 1/2 inch deep on its side. If it's germinated, have the root go down. Handle germinated nuts gently as they are fragile. To keep rodents and rabbits away from the nut and seedling for several years, surround the nut with a cylinder of aluminum flashing 2.5 inches in diameter and 10 inches long. You can buy the flashing at most hardware or building supply stores and cut it with scissors or a lever-action paper cutter; I start with squares 10 inches by 9 inches. Use tape to hold the flashing in a cylindrical shape. Wrap the tape all the way around the cylinder. Make the top of the cylinder slightly smaller than the bottom. Jam the cylinder down around the nut. Mound dirt around it so it won't blow away. Cover the cylinder with an 8-ounce styrofoam coffee cup until the seedling is two-third of the way to the top of the cylinder or until early June. You will have to check the cylinders every other day starting around May 1; if the nut grows to the top of the styrofoam cup, it will curl around inside, and may become deformed. Punch a hole in the side of the cup to let in air. Mulch 1.5 feet around the cylinder with black plastic or bark or wood chips. After the seedlings come out of the top of the cylinder, fertilize them every other week by filling the cylinder with a solution of MirAcid (1 tablespoon per gallon of water). Alternatively, apply about 12 ounces of 20-6-6 in a 3-foot-radius circle around the tree in early May and late June (prepare 20-6-6 by mixing well one bag of Ammonium Nitrate and 2 bags of 10-10-10 in a wheel barrow). Continue fertilization until mid August, unless you have a severe drought. If it does dry up, and you can't water the seedlings, stop fertilizing. (It's also OK to go on vacation and skip a few fertilizations!) In the fall, pull the mulch back about 6 inches from the cylinder so mice don't make a nest in the root system.