



If a Tree Falls: Rediscovering the Great American Chestnut

Douglas J. Buege

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One-hundred years after one of the most severe ecological and economic disasters in US history began, environmentalist Douglas Buege returns to the scene of the crime to uncover modern attempts to right the terrible wrong. The American chestnut, once dominant throughout Appalachia, faced near extinction from a fungal blight likely introduced on foreign stock imported at Long Island. Its future lies in the hands of a variety of groups and individuals striving to bring the tree back. The American Chestnut Foundation and the American Chestnut Cooperators Foundation, with radically different approaches, use current understanding of genetics, ecology, mycology, and botany in their efforts to save a beloved species. The big question remains, Will it ever be enough? The Twenty-First Century has already been termed "the Age of Extinction," promising immense reductions in Earth's biodiversity. One-tenth of tree species across the globe face extinction in our lifetimes. Buege sets out to teach us the strengths and weaknesses of plans to save American chestnut in hopes that other species-hemlocks, ashes, oaks, butternuts, and other threatened trees-may benefit. Perhaps humanity can undo some of its damage before it's too late.



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