

## Scientists could save American Chestnut Tree with genetic engineering—if regulators let them

Two deer-fenced plots here contain some of the world's most highly regulated trees. Each summer researchers double-bag every flower the trees produce. One bag, made of breathable plastic, keeps them from spreading pollen. The second, an aluminum mesh screen added a few weeks later, prevents squirrels from stealing the spiky green fruits that emerge from pollinated flowers. The researchers report their every move to regulators with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). "We tell them when we plant and where we plant and how many we plant," says Andrew Newhouse, a biologist at the nearby State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry ....

These American chestnut trees (*Castanea dentata*) are under such tight security because they are genetically modified (GM) organisms, engineered to resist a deadly blight that has all but erased the once widespread species from North American forests. Now, Newhouse and his colleagues hope to use the GM chestnuts to restore the tree to its former home. In the coming weeks, they plan to formally ask U.S. regulators for approval to breed their trees with nonengineered relatives and plant them in forests.

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