

United States Department of Agriculture

Soil Conservation Service

Program Aid Number 1358

# 'Golden' chinquapin



## 'Golden' chinquapin

'Golden' chinquapin is a small tree with an irregular growth form. It produces nuts that are an excellent source of food for wildlife during fall and winter. The nuts are eaten by squirrel, deer, grouse, bobwhite, and wild turkey.

In April 1983, the Soil Conservation Service (SCS), University of Kentucky Agricultural Experiment Station, and Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife jointly released Colden for commercial production.

### Description

Golden chinquapin (*Castanea pumila* [L.] Mill.) grows 15 to 20 feet tall. The leaves are similar to those of chestnut but are smaller—3 to 6 inches long—and have pointed teeth.

Chinquapin nuts are enclosed in spiny burs. When mature, the burs are golden and about 1 inch in diameter.

Chinquapin nuts are edible and have a sweet taste. They are similar to chestnuts but are about half their size and, unlike chestnuts, are not flattened on the sides. Chinquapin nuts are about 1/2 inch in diameter. They are ovate and

have a point at one end. Their color ranges from chocolate to blackish brown. There are about 310 nuts per pound.

Chinquapin may produce nuts by the end of the second growing season after seedlings are transplanted. However, significant nut production does not occur until the third or fourth year. Eight-year-old plants at Quicksand, Ky., produced 1,500 to 1,800 nuts (about 5 to 6 pounds) per plant.

### Adaptation

Chinquapin is native to the Eastern United States. It was first evaluated in 1960 at the SCS Plant Materials Center (PMC) in Americus, Ga. Original seed was collected in Town County, Ca.

In 1974, testing of chinquapin seedlings from Americus began at the PMC in Quicksand, Ky., where Golden was selected for its superior vigor and sustained yield.

Colden chinquapin is adapted to a wide range of soils and site conditions. It flourishes on well-drained soils and in

full sun or partial shade. It can grow on most soil textures except heavy clay.

Colden is adapted in most of the East and parts of the South and Midwest (see map). To ensure good nut production in the northern half of chinquapin's range, avoid planting it in frost pockets.

### Establishment

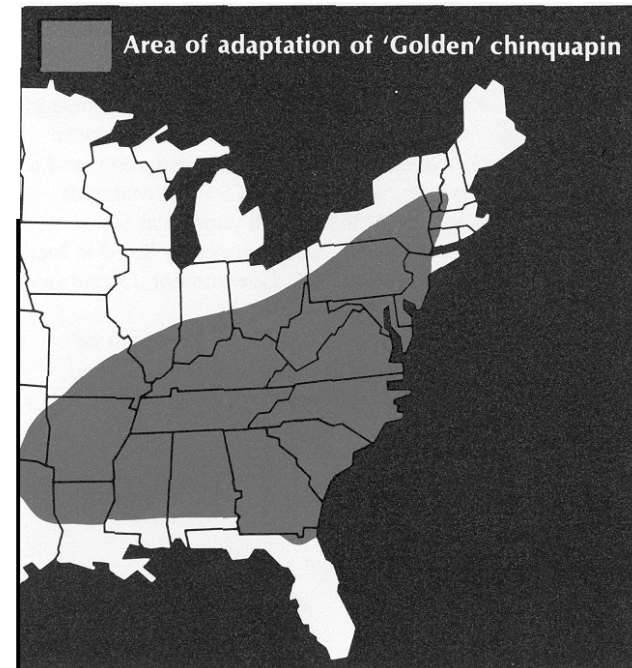
For maximum nut production, plant seedlings 8 feet apart on a site where they will get at least 50 percent sunlight. Plant 1-year-old seedlings in early spring.

To prepare the site for each seedling, scalp the sod and weeds from an area at least 3 feet in diameter. Then dig a hole just deep enough to allow placing the seedling at the same depth it had in the nursery bed. In the bottom of the hole, spread a handful of 10-10-10 fertilizer and cover with 2 or 3 inches of soil.

When placing the seedling in the hole, make sure fertilizer does not touch the roots. Water immediately. To conserve



Chinquapin nuts mature in fall, when the spiny burs split open. The nuts are eaten by squirrel, deer, grouse, bobwhite, and wild turkey.



moisture and reduce weeds, mulch around the seedling with wood chips, sawdust, pine needles, or straw. Watering and mulching at planting time are essential for good seedling survival.

Keep the site clear of competing vegetation for about 2 years until the plant becomes well established.

## Propagation

Seedlings of Golden chinquapin are easy to propagate from nuts collected from foundation-stock plants.

Average germination rate of fresh seed is more than **80** percent. Seeds kept over the winter begin to sprout and dry, and less than half will develop into seedlings.

In early November, plant the seed by conventional nursery procedures at a depth of **3/4** to **1** inch to ensure excellent germination. **One-year-old** seedlings are about **12** to **16** inches tall.

## Availability

Seedlings for wildlife **plantings** of Golden chinquapin are available from commercial nurseries. Foundation stock for establishing seed orchards is available **from** the Quicksand PMC through local soil and water conservation districts.

For more information on availability, propagation, and use of Golden chinquapin, write to the SCS Plant Materials Center (Quicksand KY **41363**) or call **your** local Soil Conservation Service office. SCS is generally listed in local telephone **directories** under "U.S. Government, Department of Agriculture."

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