

# HAZELNUT PROJECT PROPELS TO NEXT STAGE

Members play key role in developing superior hybrid with world-wide potential.

BY JAMES R. FAZIO

It all began in 1996 when 60 promising hazelnut hybrids were planted at Arbor Day Farm. Soon Arbor Day Foundation members all over the United States were pitching in to plant seedlings from the hybrids and respond to annual questionnaires about how well their plants were doing in their locality. The goal was – and is – to help scientists from cooperating universities develop disease-resistant hazels with superior nuts and that can be economically grown over a wide range of the United States. The environmental and economic impact of such a contribution to woody agriculture will be huge.

Now, after thousands of responses from members, those who have reported the largest hazelnuts and superior bushes are being asked to send samples. These will be grown in the greenhouse at Arbor Day Farm and crossbred with bushes on the 9-acre research field beside Lied Lodge & Conference Center. Records being kept of the bushes will reveal if the results produce even better hazelnut prodigy. In coming years, this cycle will be repeated. In a sense, we are helping nature speed up what might take natural selection millenniums to achieve. It is essentially the same process

that people have used to develop superior apples, pears and other fruits from their wild forbearers.

The road to this point in the research has not been without bumps. Curtis Goss of Bolivar, Missouri, reported that squirrels have discovered his bushes and taken a toll. “Three years ago I got 25 pounds of nuts on 3 bushes,” he reported. “This year I have 5 bushes but I’ll be lucky to get nuts.” Nonetheless, Curtis reports that his hazels are usually the size of a nickel or more, so he is sending 11 of his survivors for the next stage of the research.

Lloyd Haims has been faithfully tracking his hazelnut production since 2005. Unfortunately, his region of Illinois saw its corn crops devastated by drought last summer. Like other woody crops, hazelnuts fared better but were still affected. The nuts were a bit smaller and fewer than usual with his best bushes going from 1,000 or more nuts down to about 200. Despite the setback, Lloyd is as enthusiastic as ever about the hazelnut research. His contribution to the effort this year will be 30 of his largest nuts.

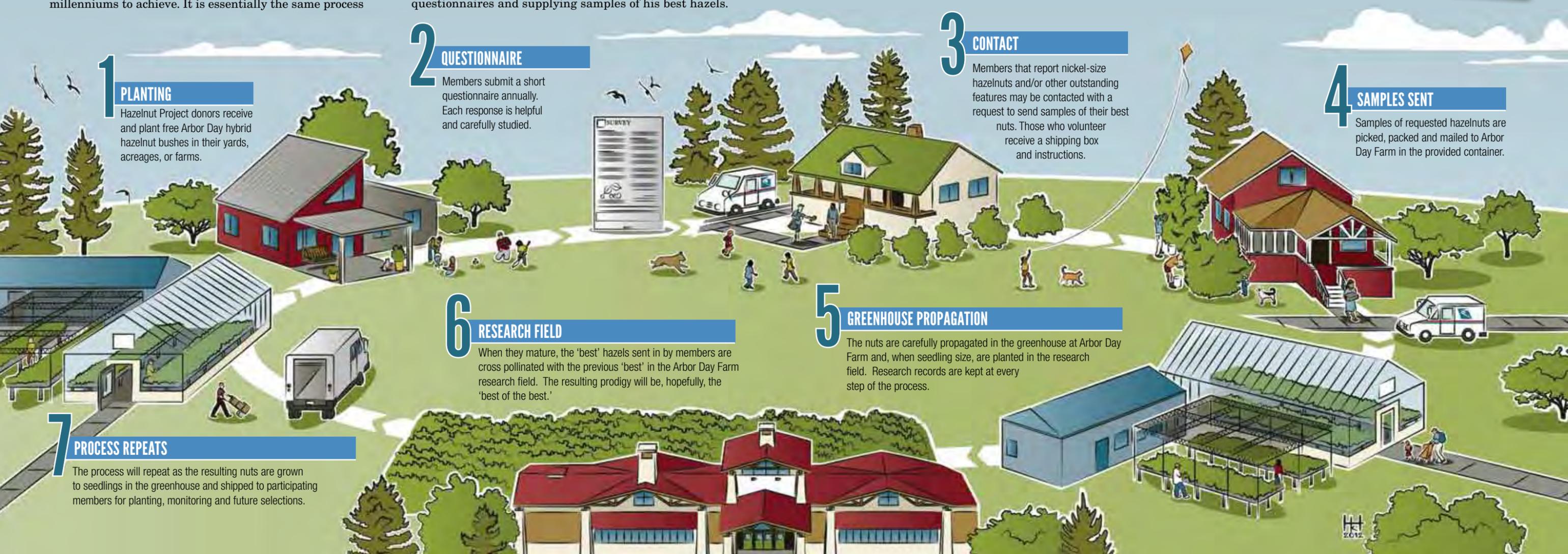
In Lloyd’s case, he has gone beyond submitting questionnaires and supplying samples of his best hazels.

He is working to involve his alma mater, Southern Illinois University, in hazelnut research. “I would like a research plot set up on campus and a program in which private landowners could donate use of their land for other plots for research and teaching,” said Lloyd. And he walks the talk. He has already purchased 100 hazelnuts to plant on land owned by a retired professor and planted them with the help of students.

Thanks to Arbor Day Foundation members who plant hazelnuts and return questionnaires, locate wild hazels for diversifying the genetic pool, or send samples of their best produce, the research moves forward. As a result of this good work, the project is transforming into a meaningful solution for issues facing our world. For more information about this important project, please visit [arborday.org/hazelnuts](http://arborday.org/hazelnuts).



Lloyd Haims of Alto Pass, Illinois, with one of his prized hazelnut bushes and its produce.



### 1 PLANTING

Hazelnut Project donors receive and plant free Arbor Day hybrid hazelnut bushes in their yards, acreages, or farms.

### 2 QUESTIONNAIRE

Members submit a short questionnaire annually. Each response is helpful and carefully studied.

### 3 CONTACT

Members that report nickel-size hazelnuts and/or other outstanding features may be contacted with a request to send samples of their best nuts. Those who volunteer receive a shipping box and instructions.

### 4 SAMPLES SENT

Samples of requested hazelnuts are picked, packed and mailed to Arbor Day Farm in the provided container.

### 6 RESEARCH FIELD

When they mature, the ‘best’ hazels sent in by members are cross pollinated with the previous ‘best’ in the Arbor Day Farm research field. The resulting prodigy will be, hopefully, the ‘best of the best.’

### 5 GREENHOUSE PROPAGATION

The nuts are carefully propagated in the greenhouse at Arbor Day Farm and, when seedling size, are planted in the research field. Research records are kept at every step of the process.

### 7 PROCESS REPEATS

The process will repeat as the resulting nuts are grown to seedlings in the greenhouse and shipped to participating members for planting, monitoring and future selections.