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president, George Washington. Earlier this month, workers gathered buds from tall, old trees on the grounds of George Washington's home, Mount Vernon. It is in the state of Virginia, near Washington, D-C. The experts hope to produce genetic copies, or clones, of the trees and plant them on the property.

Tree experts David Milarch (MILL-ark) and his son, Jared, are leading the efforts. They gained experience in cloning old trees through the Champion Tree Project. They started the project to produce genetic copies of the largest trees in the United States. Over the next ten years, the project plans to provide Mount Vernon with one-thousand trees for planting in nearby wooded areas.

During the past century, Mount Vernon has lost more than seventy trees that were planted when George Washington was alive.

As a special project, David and Jared Milarch offered to make clones of the thirteen oldest trees at Mount Vernon. They are huge, beautiful trees. George Washington supervised the planting of these trees more than two-hundred years ago.

The Milarch family plans to grow fifty copies of each tree in tree nurseries in Alabama and Oregon. They will return the trees to be planted at Mount Vernon in two years. Some copies of the trees will be sent to the Arnold Arboretum at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts for safe keeping.

Grafting is the name of the process used to clone trees. It has been done for thousands of years. A method called the T-bud technique often is used to copy trees.

Workers begin by cutting the bark, or covering, on the side of a young tree. The cut is made in the shape of a cross, or the letter T. Next, the workers find a bud, or small growth, on the tree to be copied. A small piece of wood under the bud is carefully removed from the tree. The bud is then put into the hole on the other tree. The bud is tightly tied in place and begins to grow.

Mount Vernon officials say George Washington was interested in his tree collection. The officials add that he was a strong environmentalist. They say the old trees are important because they existed when America's first president was alive.

This VOA Special English Science Report was written by George Grow.

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