

American Elm

Ulmus americana

American elms, once iconic components of forests and boulevards, were devastated by Dutch elm disease last century. The disease is carried by bark beetles and infects mature trees, so you can still find young elms and scattered mature trees. Luckily, several elm varieties have been bred to resist the disease, and hopefully, this stately tree will make a comeback soon. Elms have serrated leaves with prominent veins, and their wood is heavy and tough; once used for boats, furniture, and saddle trees.

Height: 50' to 70', exceptional trees could reach 100'

Growth rates vary, but many cultivars will grow several feet per year when young.

Planting environment:

Soil: Adaptable, but prefers rich loams, dislikes organic soils

Moisture: Moist, wet soils, can tolerate drier conditions

Sunlight: Full sun to partial sun (needs >4 hours of sun/day)

American elm is not a recommended species for planting, because it's still susceptible to Dutch elm disease. Plant a cultivar bred to be resistant to the disease if you want to plant an elm.

Maintenance:

Since bark beetles carry Dutch elm disease, be on the lookout for damage on small twigs, small branches, or main branches on surviving trees. Remove infected branches as quickly as possible, 5-10 ft below the point of infection. If a tree is significantly infected, it will need to be removed and the wood will need to be burned, chipped, or buried. Don't prune or injure trees between April and September.

Top diseases/pests:

1. Dutch elm disease
2. Elm phloem necrosis

