



Ulmus americana var. *floridana* Florida Elm¹

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INTRODUCTION

This native North American tree grows quickly when young, forming a broad or upright, vase-shaped silhouette, 60 to 80 feet high and wide (Fig. 1). The six-inch-long, deciduous leaves are dark green throughout the year, fading to yellow before dropping in fall. In early spring, before the new leaves unfold, the rather inconspicuous, small, green flowers appear on pendulous stalks. These blooms are followed by green, wafer-like seedpods which mature soon after flowering is finished and the seeds are quite popular with both birds and wildlife. American Elm must be at least 15-years-old before it will bear seed. The copious amount of seeds can create a mess on hard surfaces for a period of time. Trees have an extensive but shallow root system.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Ulmus americana* var. *floridana*

Pronunciation: UL-mus uh-mair-ih-KAY-nuh
variety flor-ih-DAY-nuh

Common name(s): Florida Elm

Family: *Ulmaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 8 through 9 (Fig. 2)

Origin: native to North America

Uses: large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size); wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; reclamation plant; shade tree; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); residential street tree; tree has been successfully grown in urban areas where air pollution, poor drainage, compacted soil, and/or drought are common

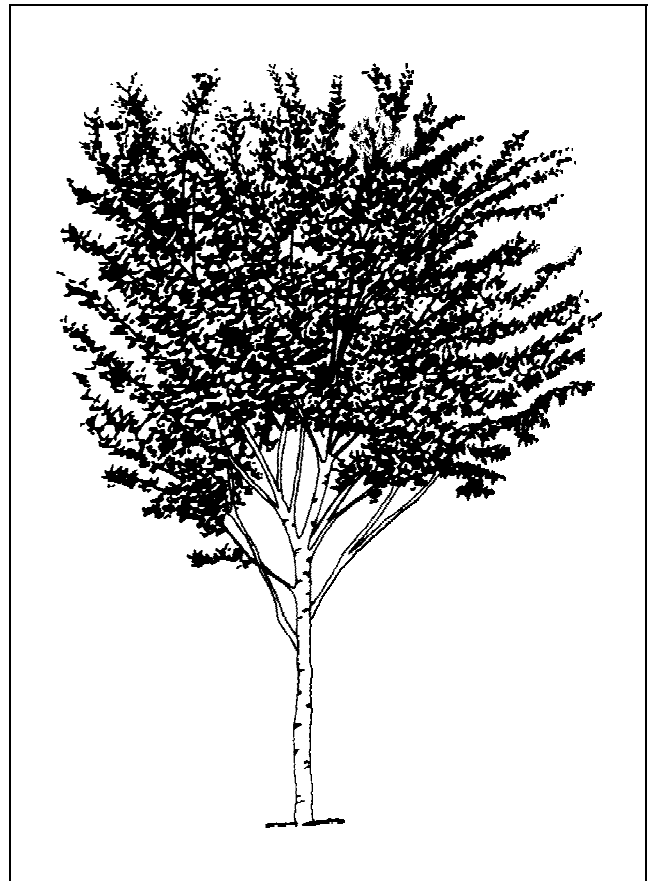


Figure 1. Young Florida Elm.

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

DESCRIPTION

Height: 60 to 80 feet
Spread: 50 to 60 feet
Crown uniformity: symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms
Crown shape: upright; vase shape
Crown density: moderate
Growth rate: fast
Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: double serrate
Leaf shape: oblong; ovate
Leaf venation: pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: deciduous
Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches; 2 to 4 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: yellow
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: green
Flower characteristics: inconspicuous and not showy; spring flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: round
Fruit length: .5 to 1 inch; < .5 inch
Fruit covering: dry or hard
Fruit color: green
Fruit characteristics: attracts birds; inconspicuous and not showy; fruit, twigs, or foliage cause significant litter

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: grow mostly upright and will not droop; not particularly showy; should be grown with a single leader; no thorns
Pruning requirement: requires pruning to develop strong structure
Breakage: susceptible to breakage either at the crotch due to poor collar formation, or the wood itself is

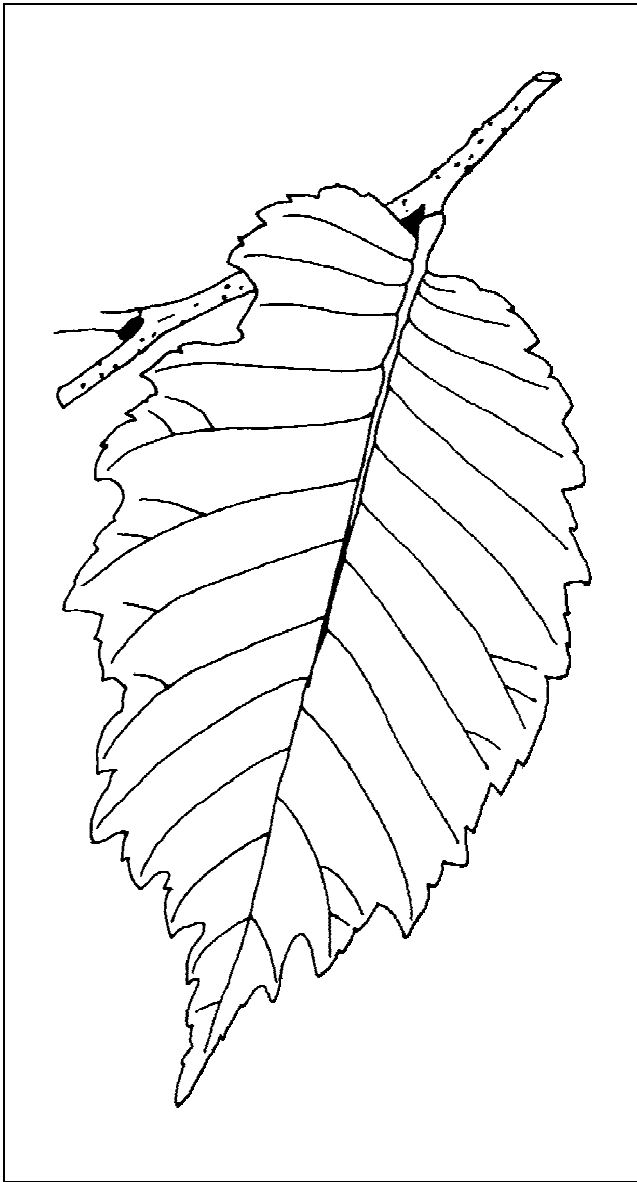


Figure 3. Foliage of Florida Elm.

weak and tends to break

Current year twig color: brown

Current year twig thickness: thin

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in part shade/part sun;
tree grows in full sun

Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; acidic; alkaline;
extended flooding; well-drained

Drought tolerance: moderate

Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding tree: not particularly outstanding

Invasive potential: little, if any, potential at this time

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: susceptible

Pest resistance: long-term health usually not
affected by pests

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Once a very popular and long-lived shade and street tree, American Elm suffered, and is currently suffering, a dramatic decline in most areas in the north with the introduction of Dutch elm disease, a fungus spread by a bark beetle. The wood of American Elm is very hard and was a valuable timber tree used for lumber, furniture and veneer. The Indians once made canoes out of American Elm trunks, and early settlers would steam the wood so it could be bent to make barrels and wheel hoops. It was also used for the rockers on rocking chairs. Today, the wood that can be found is used mainly for making furniture.

American Elm should be grown in full sun on well-drained, rich soil. If you plant American Elm, plan on implementing a monitoring program to watch for symptoms of Dutch elm disease. It is vital to the health of existing trees that a program be in place to administer special care to these disease-sensitive trees.

Propagation is by seed or cuttings. Young plants transplant easily.

Pests

Many pests may infest Elm, including bark beetles, elm borer, gypsy moth, mites, and scales.

Diseases

Many diseases may infect Elm, including Dutch elm disease, phloem necrosis, leaf spot diseases, and cankers.