

Ulmus americana

American Elm

Family: Ulmaceae



"I dipped my eyes into the lake of my hometown.

Drowned by the years

Drunk with an old elm tree that watches for the way back.

The surging heart creates waves."

- Lei Junhua, *Looking at My Hometown* (translated from Mandarin)

"Love needs new leaves every summer of life, as much as your elm-tree, and new branches to grow broader and wider, and new flowers to cover the ground."

- Harriet Beecher Stowe



GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Size: 125ft

Form: Broad and upright, vase shaped

Fall Colors: Yellow and golden

Flowers: The flowers of the elm do not have petals and arrive in clusters

Fruit: The fruit is a flat samara which is 0.8in long with a circular wing surrounding the seed.

Bark: Flattened ridges with intervening furrows, having gray-brown coloration.

Native: Yes

HABITAT

The American Elm is found in a variety of habitats throughout eastern North America extending from southern Canada to parts of Florida and Texas. This species thrives in loamy soils and is common in bottomlands, alluvial flats, margins of streams, ponds, swamps, and lakes, and on moist fertile slopes and uplands. It grows well with other hardwoods like sycamore, green ash, and sugarberry, but it is shaded out by larger trees including sugar maple trees. The American Elm has an intermediate shade tolerance, but it does not have a high tolerance for prolonged flooding especially during growing season (4-H Forest).

HISTORY & STORY

In its prime, the American Elm was the most widely planted shade tree in the United States. This vase-shaped tree has broad, curved trunk-like branches, making it ideal for a large shade tree. Before Europeans settled our country, various Native American tribes conducted commerce and made treaties under the Elms. This practice continued after the founding of the United States. The likes of George Washington, William Penn, and Abraham Lincoln all made important decisions or signed bills under the elms.

INTERESTING FEATURES

The American elm has medium-sized oblong, coarse double leaves with pointed tips and uneven leaf bases. The American Elm can adapt to a wide range of soil types and moisture conditions which affect how tall they grow.