

Alberta Dutch Elm Disease Awareness Week June 22- June 30

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Alberta is constantly under the threat of Dutch Elm Disease (DED) pressing its borders from two sides, Saskatchewan and Montana. DED has killed millions of elms throughout North America since 1930, when it was first introduced by infected wood from Europe. The Society to Prevent Dutch Elm Disease (STOPDED) is focused on the prevention of this deadly disease. Public awareness is a key component to the success of the program and June 22-30 has been designated as **Dutch Elm Disease Awareness Week**.

DED is caused by a fungus that clogs the elm tree's water conducting system, causing the tree to die, usually within one or two seasons. The fungus that affects all species of elm is primarily spread by moving elm wood that is carrying the beetles and fungus. The elm bark beetles are attracted to healthy elms to feed, and later in the season they seek out weak and dying trees, which serve as breeding sites for the beetles. In the spring, once the beetles have pupated and turned into adults, they leave the brood gallery and fly to healthy elms to feed, thus transporting the fungus on their bodies from one tree to the next.

In order to help save the one million elms, worth 2 billion dollars, that are growing in Alberta, awareness must be raised on DED. To this end, Dutch Elm Disease Awareness Week focus is on messaging of the importance of elm trees to provincial communities and emphasize to Albertans that DED can be prevented. Please take a moment and find out how you can help.

What can you do to help save our beautiful American elm trees:

- Keep your elm trees healthy, and vigorous.
- Water elms well from April to mid-August. To allow the tree to harden off for the winter, watering should be stopped mid-August followed by a good soaking or two before freeze-up.
- Remove dead branches and trees as they provide beetle habitat. Since elm bark beetles are attracted to fresh tree wounds, pruning can only be between October 1 to March 31 when the beetles are not in their active stage.
- Dispose of all elm wood by burning, burying or chipping it. Elm wood provides ideal breeding sites for the beetles.
- Learn how to identify the signs of DED <https://www.alberta.ca/dutch-elm-disease-overview>.
- Report DED symptoms to the STOPDED hotline, 1-877-837-ELMS. A confirmed DED tree must be removed immediately to prevent further spread.
- Become more involved in the preservation of our elm trees and become a STOPDED member.

What you shouldn't do!

- **Do not** transport or store elm firewood at any time! DED and the beetles are declared pests under the AB Agricultural Pests Act making it illegal.

- **Do not** transport elm firewood into or within Alberta! Firewood is confiscated at all the Alberta-Montana border crossings.
- **Do not** prune elms between April 1st to September 30th. The beetles are active during this time and can be attracted to the scent of fresh tree cuts, possibly infecting a healthy tree.

Up to 50% of the trees planted in Alberta municipal landscapes are elms. Elm trees are a large shade tree and since they are so good at surviving the Alberta climate, they dominate the planted tree scape across rural and urban Alberta.

DED has been found in Alberta in 3 isolated cases. 1998 in Wainwright (1 tree) Lethbridge 2020 (2 trees) and in Edmonton 2024 (5 trees). All infected trees were removed as per the Provincial DED Prevention/Control Measures which is enforceable under the Alberta Agricultural Pests Act. Elm trees in all 3 municipalities were immediately surveyed for signs of DED in elm trees and elm firewood near the detection sites. Although it is not possible to determine how the disease arrived, it is most often brought to new regions through the transport of firewood.

Alberta is still classified as a DED free province. Our elms are a treasure that we can't afford to lose.