

# *SOS Elms News*

Newsletter No. 9, Autumn - Winter 1998-1999  
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## Tree Inventory Update - Ray Boyle

At the end of September 1998 we are nearing the end of the second year of a comprehensive tree inventory for Saskatoon. This is a large project following on the successful completion of surveys in small towns and cities in Saskatchewan.

Almost all private houses in treed areas in Saskatoon have now been surveyed. Other areas are new ones with a low proportion of trees to houses. Parks have not been done as the city presumably has this data. It should be noted that to be recorded, trees have to be at least 2 meters (7 feet) high and 7 centimeters (3 inches) in diameter. Bushes are not included. In all, about 20,000 houses with 200,000 trees have been tabulated and mapped.

The main impetus for this survey has been the possibility that we may lose our magnificent elm trees from Dutch Elm Disease (D.E.D.), and many of these are on private property. However, we are also losing our older Manitoba Maples because they are reaching the end of their lives, as well as our birch trees from birch bronze borer.

SOS Elms has organized these surveys, but the surveyors' funding has been provided by New Careers, a provincial government project to train people presently on welfare to learn good work habits and some specialized and useful knowledge; in the

latter respect they learn about field data collection, the clear recording of accurate data (both on field spreadsheets and block maps), and the entry of such data into a computer system. New Careers appreciates the fact that we provide good training and we believe that the overall operation improves the person's viewpoint and capabilities considerably. Supporting funds have been provided by the Saskatoon Foundation, Saskatchewan Environmental and Resource Management (SERM) and Canada Trust (Friends of the Environment).

The computer developments for this amount of data and its easy analysis and presentation are not trivial. The system is based on Windows 95 EXCEL and DESIGNCAD as the mapping package. There are three main sub-packages of these as follows:

1. Special procedures (macros) for data entry from the field data.
2. Automatic procedures to analyze and derive data from specialized maps, such as for all birch trees which have shown signs of bronze birch borer, or all American elm trees, or city versus private trees in a given area.
3. Full edit capabilities starting from a map presentation. Trees can be deleted, changed, moved or added by simple point and click operations.

As well as this, there is a presentation method to interest the public. The person can click on an area of the city and then the block where he/she lives. It then asks such questions as their estimate of the number of American elms in their block. It finally gives the surveyed answer and displays a block map showing all the trees in colour and symbol form; this map can be printed and taken home. We also ask them to come back and tell us (on the computer) about any errors they find. This whole program (entirely in EXCEL) is attractive in its use of pictures and sound which make it akin to a game. It is proposed to set up this computer at a central point, but lend it for a week at a time to schools where a teacher has shown interest. If DED were to strike we will need the....

### **Update on Protect-An-Elm Private Investigator Project: An Elm Education Program for Grade 4 to 6 Children**

by Judith Benson, Project Leader, Sept. 1998

The Protect-An-Elm P.I. Project has been implemented for two years now and is available for the 1998-99 school year as well. It is designed to train children to be private investigators who will learn to identify American and Siberian Elms (the good guys) and do surveillance for signs of danger, namely damage done by the beetle (the bad guy) that carries the DED fungus. The program is open to school classes and groups (e.g. Guides, Scouts, etc.) free of charge thanks to a grant from the Saskatchewan Outdoor and Environmental Education Association (SOEEA), which is sponsored by SaskLotteries.

The project includes two, one-hour introductory sessions by the project leader. Then the teacher or group leader proceeds with the program, using materials provided.

Materials include an Elm Journal, which explains the program and includes all necessary background information, plus pages for student ideas and reflection, art and journal entries. When the group leader feels that the students are ready, the project leader returns and they both present the participants with a series of questions. After answering the questions correctly, students receive an Elm P.I. badge and identification card. The expectations are that each participant will continue to take responsibility for elm surveillance as an individual and will share his/her knowledge with others in their family and community.

This program provides children with life skills for making a difference as a citizen of Saskatoon and fits well into the grade 4-6 Science curriculum. Because groups need ready access to American elm trees, please note that transportation to areas of high elm density will be necessary if applicants are not already based in such an area. If you are interested, please contact the project leader at (306) 653-4339.

### **Close Call for Saskatoon**

submitted by Elena Schacherl  
DED Program Administrator, Sept. 1998

On the way to the farmers' market this summer, I spotted a large American Elm at 333 Fourth Avenue North that looked like it must surely be infected with DED. There were wilting, yellow and curling brown leaves starting in the crown of the tree and continuing almost halfway to the base. Several branches near the top had already lost all their leaves. Located just down the street from city hall, this could have been devastating for some of Saskatoon's most mature and valuable elms. A sample was taken from one of the branches showing

wilting symptoms and sent to Saskatchewan Agriculture's plant disease laboratory in Regina. Fortunately, the diagnosis was Dothiorella Wilt, not Dutch Elm Disease.

Dothiorella Wilt shows almost identical symptoms as DED, but the prognosis for the elm tree is much better. If it is caught quickly enough and the affected branches are pruned, the tree can usually be saved. The infected elm found this summer, unfortunately, seemed to have a more severe case of Dothiorella, and will likely be removed.

While Saskatoon remains DED free this year, twenty other communities in the province were not as lucky. The native elm bark beetle that spreads the DED fungus is running out of healthy elms in the native stands. As a result, mass disbursement is taking place into adjoining communities.

New sites of DED found in this summer's survey include Tisdale, moving the disease closer of Saskatoon from the north. Lumsden remains the closest point of infection south of Saskatoon. DED was also found for the first time in Carlyle, Arcola and Stockholm (just west of Esterhazy).

