

SOS Elms News

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President's Message

- Judith Benson

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream

The earth, and every common sight,

To me did seem

Appareled in celestial light

The glory and the freshness of a dream.

- William Wordsworth, 1807

SOS Elms Coalition was founded upon our members sharing a common regard for Saskatchewan's American elms. Wordsworth's use of past tense in the above lines reflects his observation of changes in the natural world he depended upon for inspiration. Although the changes have multiplied over the past two hundred

years, nature's legacy to us is ever present in earth's stately, mature trees. I was fortunate to visit Michigan, Illinois and Oregon this year; and my husband, Geoff, and I visited England, France and Ireland in September. Last spring, Geoff and I walked along an elm-lined street bordering Chicago's lake shore. In July, my son and I revisited the two and three-hundred year old American elms in the quadrangle of his alma mater, the University of Michigan Law School. The crunching sounds and earthy smell of Oregon maple leaves underfoot, provided the perfect atmosphere for the first-trick-or-treat night I have been able to spend with my granddaughters. As I photographed unique trees during my travels, I felt an appreciation of how trees instill world unity and personal security. These giants of nature overwhelmed me without threat, provided shade for picnics in Shropshire, a feeling of awe along the Champs Elysees in Paris and a source of fun—palm tree hugging—in Ireland. Trees, like good music, provide a sense of universal harmony.

SOS Elms Coalition, in its tenth year, continues to play an active role to raise awareness of the importance of our maintaining a diversified and healthy urban forest. Many non-elm species are experiencing the end of their life cycles and/or invasion by their own pests and forms of disease. That fact, combined with the imminent arrival of Dutch elm disease

(DED) to Saskatoon, makes our job as tree protectors timely, indeed.

We welcome new members and thank those of you who continue to renew your memberships and contribute your time, talents and monetary gifts to our organization. Ideas for our latest projects are the result of partnering with the Saskatchewan Dutch Elm Disease Association and have been made possible through funding from our members, the Saskatoon Foundation, Saskatchewan Environment, the City of Saskatoon, and the Meewasin Valley Authority. Many thanks to all who have worked to preserve and protect our glorious American elms. Please stay with us in the vitally important years to come.

Thanks to Stephanie Laverty and Richard Kerbes, who have kept the SOSE Board strong and active by filling the chair of president until my retirement from teaching last June. Thanks also to those of you who sat at our SOSE information table at the Farmers Market last summer.

Finally, a note about newsletters. We issue a newsletter when we have new developments and events to share with you. Please feel welcome to contribute family tree stories, commentaries, poems, drawings, cartoons and photographs regarding elms. The more material we have, the more newsletters we will be able to create. Our post office address and website are listed in this issue.

On behalf of SOS Elms Coalition, I wish you all healthy, happy holidays and a peaceful, treeful new year.

New Home Owners' Guides on the Way

One of the very successful publications produced by SOS Elms has been the "*Home-owner's Guide to Elm Care and DED*

Prevention in Saskatchewan". This publication was originally widely distributed as a local version in Saskatoon alone, but was then redistributed as a provincial guide. It seems that of all the DED information items offered, the "*Home Owners Guide*" proves to be the most popular item at trade shows and displays.

Thanks to funding from Saskatchewan Environment, SDEDA and SOS Elms a revised version of the publication is now at the printers and we will soon have 10,000 copies available for use through the agencies listed above. Along with their use at trade shows, the guides will be distributed to garden centres and pruning supply stores in targeted areas this spring.

The one idea recently suggested at a board meeting was that members may be persuaded to use the new guide as part of a door-to-door campaign in their neighbourhoods to promote DED awareness and to recruit new members. If you would be willing to do this, please let Judith Benson know and she will make arrangements to get the new guides to you.

A Visit to the Rendek Elm Forest

- Linda Moskalyk

The Rendek Elm Forest is located just east of the town of Hudson Bay. The little 35 acre nature sanctuary is tucked in among the farms and woodlands bordering the Red Deer River of north-eastern Saskatchewan.

It feels quietly spiritual to stand among the ferns, look up at the towering elms and listen to the chorus of bird life that exists there. It could be called Saskatchewan's small tropical secret. The majestic elms share this spot with northern ferns that thrive under the canopy and sometimes stretch to a height of five and six feet tall. The abundance of plant and bird life is amazing. Some bird species that we

identified were woodpeckers, sandhill cranes, American redstarts, warblers and goldfinches. The forest floor is home to mosses, bunchberry, raspberries and a large-leaved plant that we think might be cow parsnip.

There is an area in these woods that is particularly interesting. As I entered that part of the forest, the massive trunks reminded me of giant cottonwoods that grow along the rivers. A closer look confirmed that they are actually elms. The diameter of these trunks and the thick layer of soft mosses and hollow cavities at the base are signs of age, not disease. It is hard to believe that someday this little ecosystem might not exist as a unique native elm forest.

When I first arrived I was greeted at the entrance to the forest by one large elm that stood lifeless and naked against the otherwise dark green backdrop of the Rendek. As I walked into the forest a closer look revealed the true demise of this ecosystem. The nature trail led past a large group of elms that all had considerable dieback. Yellow, wilting leaves confirmed the presence of Dutch elm disease. The close proximity of these infected trees seems to indicate the ease with which the disease can spread. If one stands along the bank of the Red Deer River, dead or dying elms can be seen sticking out in an obvious pose from the rest of the forest.

A resident who lives across the river informed me that the Rendek forest was the site of a Hudson's Bay Company trading post many years ago. Artifacts from the area have been discovered and collected. I talked later with Alex Rendek, the original owner of the property. He remembers back in the 40's and 50's when the site was used for gatherings and picnics by neighbours in the community. I hope the forest can withstand the disease by regenerating with

new species and even with younger more resilient elm. I guess only time will tell.



New Video Ad Underway

Another of the projects that SOS Elms is working on in conjunction with Saskatchewan Environment is the production of a new DED awareness advertisement for use on television as either a paid ad or a public service announcement. Initial work occurred on a rough cut of the video this summer and efforts are now being made to develop a more refined version of the ad during the winter. You may recall the previously released ad of "the girl on a swing" that focused more at the appreciation of what elms do for us. The new ad will have more of a focus on the what the symptoms of DED look like and what one should do if they see these symptoms.

Many thanks to Eveline Boudreau who is the SOS Elms representative on this project, working in conjunction with Steve Hyde from Saskatchewan Environment and Global TV. You can look for the new ad on TV stations starting in the spring of 2003.

Alberta DED Program Report - 2002 - Janet Feddes-Calpas

Unfortunately Alberta's DED prevention program was almost cut in 2002. During the recent restructuring of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development (AAFRD), Industry Development Sector (IDS), it was felt that this program was not within the IDS mandate. Through tremendous support from various groups and individuals from across western Canada, the decision to cut

the program was re-evaluated. AAFRD agreed to retain the program until April 2003 with the hope that other funding partnerships could be formed within that time period.

In 2002 beetle monitoring traps were placed throughout the province. The number of beetles trapped and the number of municipalities in the province finding beetles is substantially lower than in previous years. Firewood, in large volumes, was also confiscated at the Alberta-Montana ports of entry.

All sample results in 2002 have turned out negative for the presence of DED, however Dothiorella wilt remains a concern for the City of Edmonton. Altogether, more than 200 cases of Dothiorella wilt have been confirmed in Edmonton since 1996. To date, 74 of these have resulted in tree removal. The continued drought in southeast, northeast and central Alberta, has caused significant stress on American elms. In general, elm trees have shown good drought tolerance compared to other tree species. Red elm weevil continues to cause damage to the elms, mainly in Lethbridge, although more areas are reporting damage from this weevil. Cases of leaf miner damage, hard-shell scale and fall cankerworm have also been reported.

DED Public Awareness Week was recognized throughout the province during the week of June 24th - June 28th.

Slow Spread Spells Success – The Status of DED in Saskatchewan

- Glenn Gustafson

The 2002 Dutch Elm Disease (DED) season is now at an end and while the disease continues to make its mark in the province, we are seeing that DED management

activities are definitely slowing the spread of the problem. Without these efforts, DED would have likely spread across the entire province by now, taking with it nearly one billion dollars of urban American elms. In the world of DED, a slow spread of the disease definitely spells success!

As expected, we are seeing that the number of infections decrease or remain low in areas that are actively managing DED. For example, Estevan lost fewer trees this year than in the past several years, while Carnduff has lost the lowest number of trees in the nine years it has had DED. A total of 565 elms were lost to DED in surveyed communities and buffer zones in 2002 versus 641 trees removed in 2001, however there will be an additional 340 elms removed from the Condie Nature Refuge NW of Regina due to the poor condition of these trees.

The two main areas of concern in Saskatchewan are Lumsden and Regina. Lumsden had the highest removal numbers in the province (67 trees) and Regina had the highest tree loss in its history (14 trees). The numbers in Lumsden are not too surprising as there has been no capacity to deal with the disease in the natural areas around the town, therefore making it very difficult to control infections within the community itself. Regina's increase on the other hand, while worrying, is still well below the 2% loss rate seen in other communities with comprehensive DED programs. The increase in infections is likely due to an inadequate buffer zone for the city, a situation that will be rectified in the years to come.

We were especially pleased to see that there were no new outbreaks of the disease in surveyed communities this year. Of particular note, several communities that had infections last year, namely Moose Jaw, Weyburn, Carlyle, Moosomin, and White

City, were disease free in 2002. No infections have re-appeared in Davidson since their first removal in 1999.

The areas that are not being represented in the above numbers are the natural areas and small communities where no organized sampling is occurring. For example, it was confirmed this year that a number of elms in the Rendek Elm Forest NE of Hudson Bay has DED. The extent of this infection is unknown, as it is in other natural areas. A number of new infections were also detected in areas like Wapella and Boundry Dam, but infections in many other unmonitored areas are no doubt being missed.

It is now quite evident that where we actively manage DED we can slow down the spread of the disease dramatically. What we need to do is to involve as many groups and individuals as possible in this effort so that we can see even greater success in the future. For more information on DED in Saskatchewan check out the [SDEDA web site](#) or call 1-800-SASKELM.



Tree Distribution Program Much Appreciated in Communities

The **Saskatchewan Urban Forest Diversification Program (SUFDP)** distributed a total of 510 trees to 19 very appreciative communities across the province in September. This Tree Canada Foundation program, organized by Murray Little, is in its third year of operation and has over this time period distributed 7,200 trees to Saskatchewan communities that have either had DED or are threatened with DED.

Because of limited funding, the 2002 program was only available to communities

that have had DED. The number of trees allocated to each community was dependant on the number of elms they had lost. The tree stock distributed in the program was in 7 gallon containers with most of the trees being between 6 to 8 feet tall. It is felt that larger, containerized stock is more likely to survive and will fill in gaps in the urban forest more quickly. It's like having an instant forest appear overnight.

The aim of the program is to diversify urban forests in order that species specific diseases like DED will have less of an impact in the future. To accomplish this goal eight different species were distributed this year namely: ash, cherry, crabapple, linden, maple, mountain ash, oak and silver maple. Stock was allocated in a ratio of 1/3 ash, 1/3 larger tree species, and 1/3 smaller ornamental species. As in other years, the SDEDA assisted in the program through providing information packages to each of the participating communities containing tree planting information, DED awareness materials, as well as a "Tree Care Pledge" that the community was asked to sign. The pledge is based on maintaining trees received in the program for a three year period.

The main funding for this program has come through TransCanada Pipelines, however as this group will not be funding the program next year efforts will be made to seek an alternate sponsor. Many thanks to Murray Little for his hard work as well as thanks to the Town of Moosomin who provided space and staff time.

