

SOS Elms News



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On Guard for the Urban Forest

Season's Greetings! As 2005 draws to a close we can be thankful that Dutch Elm Disease (DED) has not yet been detected in Saskatoon. Elsewhere in the province the Saskatchewan Dutch Elm Disease Association (SDEDA) has continued to monitor and control DED as much as possible (see SDEDA Report below). Your SOS Elms board continues to work to preserve and protect the elms and other community trees of Saskatoon. As noted in articles below, we are cooperating in the ongoing SPLIT project and the new "Saskatchewan's Special Trees" program. Our Saskatoon Tree Tour booklet from 2003-2004 fits in well with the latter project.

Looking back, in a presentation made to Saskatoon City Council in February 2002, SOS Elms noted 6 points of special concern in preparing for DED:

1. Care and maintenance of privately owned elm trees.
2. DED surveillance and the need to raise awareness about DED
3. Elm wood disposal - Were city landfill fees potentially discouraging proper elm disposal? Was elm wood being segregated and disposed of properly according to provincial regulations?
4. Pruning cycle
5. Tree replacement
6. Proper pruning by certified arborists

On a positive note, in the time since then, the City has improved the pruning cycle, increased surveillance, and increased tree plantings. Starting in 2006, provincial regulations will have tightened around qualifications required by those pruning elm trees. However, points 1 and 3 still need attention. In fact, we are closely monitoring a controversy which arose in Saskatoon this month in regard to disposal methods being used by a company contracted to prune and/or remove elms for the city.

Our founding member and Past President Judith Benson (see her report below) has been especially active on behalf of elms in the downtown area and Woodlawn Cemetery.

Past President's Message

by Judith Benson

In my travels, most recently to the grounds of the Saskatchewan Legislature, I capture elms in the eye of my camera and praise communities that value their mature trees. In this message I hope not only to update our members and readers, but also to inspire you to make your fellow citizens aware of the value of Saskatoon's unique urban forest. Please write, email, and phone the mayor and members of council. Write to editors of the *Star-Phoenix* and neighbourhood newspapers about your specific observations of damage done to boulevard elms during building and road construction, as well as your general concern for the on-going decline in the City's elm numbers. Revere the elms that remain.

The Gathercole elms continue to stand thanks to many months of South Downtown Development negotiations. The fall rain helped them to survive despite the incessant beating their roots have endured due to excavation and the extreme weight of heavy machinery and temporary buildings. Thanks to the MVA, the elms and other mature trees between the Gathercole land and the river have received quality treatment, including some high-tech structures to protect tree roots from the grading and bank reinforcement work. SOS Elms directors are watching, and we hope our membership takes note when passing that area.

City council has chosen a sculpture to serve as a **landmark for the South Downtown Development**. Meanwhile, the row of six mature American elms that stand on the old Gathercole property and perpendicular to Third Street provide

natural landmarks (valued at \$20,000 each). If they were to remain, their maintenance would cost taxpayers a fraction of the \$350,000 allocated for the planned man-made structure. Although the plan "strives for the preservation of existing trees on site where possible...", the fate of those elms now rests with the new owner and developer of the Gathercole property.

To date, when the city tenders **contracts for elm removal**, they have stipulated that the chosen contractors shred them and take them to the municipal landfill for burial according the provincial regulations. *As a personal project of my own*, I have communicated with relevant individuals who are prepared, while following the appropriate regulations, to process and incorporate elm wood into commemorative benches and other furniture. If the Gathercole elms must be cut down, I hope that they can be honoured for future generations as art pieces accompanied by a written history.

This year the city removed forty plus elms that used to line **Twenty-fifth Street**. Their generous trunks and branches are now woodchips that have been stockpiled somewhere for disposal. In place of the mature trees are numerous small ones that are confined within iron grids and surrounded by new cement. Without mature trees to absorb vehicle emissions and traffic noise, the pollution level will increase considerably along this popular city route. The city has preserved a few of the elms adjacent to Twenty-fourth Street and Spadina, the site of construction of a new condominium high-rise. Some were sacrificed, and those that still stand show scars of neglect, although the city has appraised them at \$20,000 each. Come spring we shall see whether or not they survive.

There is both good news and bad news regarding the **Woodlawn Cemetery elms**. Of the 400 elms designated in 2003 as hazardous (40% or more deadwood) at Woodlawn, 160 have been removed. Rate of removals has improved, with 135 of the removals being done in 2005. However, the resulting wood chips were apparently stockpiled in an area outside the city but within the city's "buffer zone". Paradoxically, the city seems to ignore hazard elms and elm wood that serve as potential breeding sites for elm bark beetles but shreds healthy elms that get in the way of "progress". As I mentioned above I hope you share my concerns on these issues, and you will write a letter to the mayor and council.

In addition to your letter, why not celebrate our City of Trees by decorating an elm this holiday season. If you do so, please contact me so I can photograph it. I am planning the production of an archival video of the city's elms for SOS Elms, so I welcome your reminiscences about the elms. Please call me at 653-4339. Thank you for your continued membership and generous supplementary support to SOS Elms Coalition. May your holiday season be happy and warm with many hugs (including those to your trees). May the new year be healthy for you and peaceful for our planet.

Saskatchewan's Special Trees

By Murray Little, Saskatchewan Forestry Association

So often we find one huge tree; or are proud of some tree or grove in our community; or wish to share with others the significance of our trees; or we plant a ceremonial tree. But, sadly, the

significance, or the location, or the details, are soon forgotten.

"Trees of Renown" was initiated in 1984 by the Saskatchewan Forestry Association (SFA) to identify and acknowledge renowned trees. A booklet was published but was soon out-of-print and out-of-date. It was intended that this would be the forerunner of a larger project.

Saskatchewan's Special Trees is an expanded continuation of this program, which will be accessible through the internet. Shell Environmental Fund has partially funded this project. Without this funding, we would not have been able to start this project.

The primary purpose of the program is to document, and to share with others, those Saskatchewan trees which are special to us for some reason. The core will be our web-site. Here individuals or communities will be able to submit their significant trees or groves.

Web viewers will be able to browse the site for information by tree species, by community or by the type of record.

There are three major categories:

Distinguished trees includes historic, commemorative or notable for some other reason;

Record trees includes the extremes in sizes or range, (on a community basis);

Tree-Related Objects and Events, are not trees, but have a link. These may include geographic locations, historic sites, artifacts, museums, and so forth.

Saskatchewan's Special Trees was launched at the new Saskatchewan Forestry Centre in Prince Albert on

December 14th, and the project is now open for nominations. For more information, go to the SFA web site www.whitebirch.ca and click on Special Trees.

A secondary purpose, that of education, will be added to the site as we find the time and funding. We hope to add information about trees, how they grow, and how to plant and maintain them.

A Thank You to SOS Elms, and the need to avoid a False Sense of Security

By Jeff Balone, Pest Management Supervisor, City of Saskatoon

The many active members of SOS Elms Coalition that have laboured to improve the state of the urban and rural elm forests in Saskatchewan deserve a sincere “thank you”. Your activism has helped to secure and maintain a provincial and municipal budget in Saskatoon to conduct preventative pruning and the removal of elm with significant dieback along with other key components of a DED management plan. Preventive pruning of dead and dying elm material to remove elm bark beetle breeding sites is essential to prevent DED from establishing and spreading.

Although the provincial “Dutch Elm Disease Regulations, 2005” have made improvements to the management of DED, certain tradeoffs were made to accommodate municipalities in Saskatchewan. In general, this will translate into landowners having more time to remove and dispose of elm wood. It is the responsibility of the steward of the property to ensure that the elms that reside

on that property are maintained and that measures are taken to eliminate, or at least control, the spread of DED in the environment. This translates to an accountability that extends from the owner (private or public) to anyone (i.e. friend, relative, neighbour, agent or contractor) allowed to conduct action that affects an elm. As people that value the vast elm resource in Saskatoon, we are under continued pressure to compromise what we know is right for what may seem better, faster, convenient or cheaper.

Our urban elms are exposed to harsh growing conditions due to construction damage, soil compaction, pollution, global warming etc which make them particularly vulnerable. It is necessary that we work together to ensure that stewardship of the elm resource is done right. Saskatoon has been extremely fortunate to avoid many of the destructive tree insects and diseases that have devastated trees elsewhere in North America. The risk is that a false sense of security will lull us into a state of complacency on elm issues. If this happens, Saskatoon will be faced with huge losses in the future. Your work has made a major difference. Thank you for your continued vigilance.

Merry Christmas and happy holidays!

SPLIT 2005 – An Educational Tree Planting Project

By Michelle Chartier & Linda Moskalyk

Schools Plant Legacy in Trees (SPLIT) is a community partnership and an educational tree planting initiative that involves one Saskatoon school each year. This year Mayfair School was chosen to participate.

SPLIT provides an opportunity for Saskatchewan's young people to participate in a tree planting and landscaping project and to learn about relevant issues concerning Saskatchewan's forests and the environment. The founding partners in this initiative include the City of Saskatoon, the Saskatchewan Forestry Association, The Riversdale Kiwanis Club and SOS Elms Coalition. The contributors to this project include the Saskatoon Foundation, Toyota Evergreen, Saskatchewan Outdoor Environmental Education Association, and many local businesses.

The 2005 SPLIT program started with an educational session at Mayfair school in March. Speakers presented the following forestry related topics: Dutch Elm Disease, Weather and Climate Change, and Insects and Diseases that Affect our Forests. A few weeks later the Mayfair Builders Club members received a landscape design lesson from the City of Saskatoon landscape architect Hrolfer Kristinsson. Following this the students created their own landscape design for their school grounds and the adjacent boulevard. On May fourth all the classes at Mayfair attended a Forestry Expo at the Vic Rempel City Yards. This is an interactive trade show where various organizations set up displays and demonstrations. The students were introduced to provincial and urban forestry activities, environmental initiatives, pruning and planting skills, and greenhouse operations. One of the highlights of the day for many students was potting their own spruce seedling to take home. The Kiwanis Builders club students took on a leadership role and presented their landscape plan. At the end of a very busy day all agreed – it was a great success.

The original planting day was set for June 8th and then postponed until June 10th due to rain. Students were organized into groups with the Builders Club students taking a lead role in each group. School staff and program organizers also rolled up their sleeves to help. The digging, planting, watering and mulching was hard work but when the day was done approximately one hundred trees and shrubs were planted to celebrate Saskatchewan's centennial year.

The following week Mayfair school hosted a formal celebration day that included the SPLIT project and the unveiling of a new school sign and centennial garden. There were speeches from various dignitaries followed by entertainment from the school band. A tree spade demonstration took place and a large pine was planted in the school grounds. The students enjoyed watching how a big tree is planted with a very large tree spade. The program ended with refreshments and cake for everyone that attended.

The SPLIT program was well received by the students of Mayfair School and their community. They have truly left a legacy for future generations to enjoy.

In the end we hope the SPLIT project, by involving young people, will increase their awareness about the importance of trees and our environment. The area around the school will provide a habitat for wildlife, shade for the students and residents in the area, cleaner air, and the Mayfair community will be a little greener! The students and everyone involved says thank you SOS Elms for being a partner in this worthwhile project!

For photos of SPLIT check out Mayfair School website:

http://schools.spsd.sk.ca/Mayfa/new_page_6.htm

The Pruning Ban period for elms was extended in 2005. In Saskatchewan it is **now illegal to prune or remove elm trees between April 1st and August 31st**. The ban was extended because the active period of the elm bark beetle was longer than previously thought.

SDEDA Report Fall 2005

By Sheri O'Shaughnessy
Executive Director

The mandate of the Saskatchewan Dutch Elm Disease Association (SDEDA) is to *"preserve the American elm in Saskatchewan"*. It works towards this goal by promoting education and awareness across the province to the public and private sectors, home owners, educators, and school children. Urban and community forests are a vital part of Saskatchewan which must be maintained and managed for the future. These forests offer immeasurable rewards that our communities cannot afford to lose.

In 2005 SDEDA promoted awareness of DED and related issues through speaking engagements, an annual workshop, a multi-media campaign, and participation in trade shows across the province. Some of the latter included the PFRA Fields Day, National Forestry Week trade shows in both Prince Albert and Saskatoon, Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation trade show, and the Urban Municipalities conference. SDEDA also organized and held a workshop outside of Regina in June that focused on the new Provincial DED Regulations, proper elm pruning, and identification of elm wood. This is a workshop that is held on an annual basis in different locations around the province and

was a very well received and successful event this year.

SDEDA continues to work with pruners to ensure that proper practices are used when pruning elms and regulations are followed. One of the main corporate organizations that works with elm trees on a regular basis is SaskPower. SDEDA assists SaskPower in the education and awareness of its staff in the proper pruning and disposal of wood to ensure the health of the elms that are under power lines and need to be maintained in order to ensure the continued safety and function of those lines.

In all the above activities SDEDA works closely with Saskatchewan Environment in the management of DED. For more information check our web site at www.sdeda.ca

Regarding

Sticky Bands for Canker Worms

City pest management staff advise that populations remain low, with only a few isolated cases of infested trees in 2005 in Saskatoon. Therefore sticky bands are not recommended for next spring, unless an individual tree was infected in 2005.

The Yule Log

(from Canadafirst.net)

Celts, Norse and Teutons considered trees the earthly representatives of the gods. Sacrificing a Yule log to the dying sun was a universal practice.

Local customs varied from the enormous tree brought into the Scandinavian home, to the "heavy block of oak fitted into the floor of the hearth, where, though it glowed under the fire, it was hardly reduced to ashes within a year ... in the valleys of the Sieg and Lahn". The Yule log was decorated with evergreens and ribbons, and a libation poured over it before the lighting. The magical properties attributed to the sacred oak can hardly be over-emphasized. Each year a brand was rescued from the flames and reserved to rekindle next year's Yule log. During the interim, it served as a talisman to protect the home from a variety of evils, including lightning. The ashes were carefully swept from the grate and saved to impart a magical efficacy to a variety of nostrums.

Re Telephone - Please Note :

SOS Elms Coalition no longer has its own phone number – the limited usefulness of having the phone did not justify its cost, which had climbed to about \$40 per month. Therefore, please contact us by mail, or through our web site (see masthead), or phone any of our Board Members listed here.

Board of Directors

Past President: Judith Benson	653-4339
Vice-President: Doug Mitchell	244-3082
Treasurer: Geoff Benson	653-4339
Secretary: Rae Hearn	244-3082
Membership: Gary Bortolotti	665-3457
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