

SOS Elms News

Newsletter No. 13, Spring 2001

SOS Elms Coalition, P.O. Box 1313, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7K 3N9



"Count Your Trees In"

This CD-ROM version of the book describes the methods used by SOS-Elms for their tree inventory survey in Saskatchewan. It includes a very useful deductive analysis of the tree type that enabled untrained surveyors to rapidly learn to do an effective survey. This is based on the original "Count Your Trees In" but developed as a Prairie Edition by dedicated workers in SOS-Elms and at the Horticulture Dept. of the University of Saskatchewan. It is also useful for teachers of botany. For the present SOS-Elms will provide free copies to interested parties who request it, but would appreciate a donation.

Past-President's Message

- Richard Kerbes

Another season begins! Cankerworm bands should be down by now (see article). SOS Elms continues to face the challenges in our fight against Dutch elm disease (DED), and in keeping the American elm alive and well in the communities of Saskatchewan. Brad Mitchell had to resign as President in late October of last year because he left Canada for employment in Taiwan. Brad had done an excellent job for the five

months he was in the position and we were sad to see him go. No one has agreed to

take over since then, and the presidential duties have been shared by several board members. However, it would be much better to have an official president - we need a volunteer to come forward now!

SOS Elms continues to enjoy support from our loyal membership. We are grateful for their commitment and donations to our cause. We also thank The Saskatoon Foundation and Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management (SERM) for their financial support of our recent project, the production and distribution of "A Homeowner's Guide to Elm Care and DED Prevention in Saskatoon". We distributed it to some 13,000 homes in the older neighborhoods of Saskatoon in March this year (see article by Glenn Gustafson).

I continue to represent SOS Elms in the Saskatchewan Dutch Elm Disease Association (SDEDA). Glenn Gustafson, Executive Director of the SDEDA since last April, is doing an excellent job of coordinating their activities and keeping SOS Elms informed (see his report).

On a sadder note, Carolyn Hartney passed away on July 20, 2000. A long-time member and enthusiastic supporter of SOS Elms, she had also been on our board since 1999. Her contributions were appreciated very much.

Highlights of our activities since last fall include:

- A special seminar organized by Susan Kaminskyj and co-sponsored by the U of S Biology Dept
- Our member-staffed display at Gardenscapes
- A live interview which I did (in French!) with Radio Canada, on DED and SOS Elms

This spring SOS Elms assisted the City of Saskatoon with their distribution of tree seedlings from the TREEmendous Saskatchewan Foundation. A non-profit organization, it provides the opportunity for all people in Saskatchewan to enhance and learn about their environment through the planting of free tree and shrub seedlings. Its major sponsor is SaskPower, and the seedlings are grown in greenhouses at the Shand power station near Estevan. See the [TREEmendous web site](#) for more information.

Saskatchewan Dutch Elm Disease Association Report

Glenn Gustafson, Executive Director

Although efforts intensified last year in the provincial DED management program due to an increase in funding, the disease slowly continued its spread moving into the communities of Kamsack and Fort Qu'Appelle for the first time. On the other hand, overall tree removals for the year were down significantly. This was no doubt due in part to efforts to manage the disease, as well as due to the low number of trees that are still left in some areas to remove. The number of trees that "aren't" being removed is the real success story here for if we had stood back and done nothing the disease would have likely already swept through the province and the American elm would now be somewhat of a rarity.

The Saskatchewan Dutch Elm Disease Association (SDEDA) has had a busy year working to raise the profile of the Association in the province. With this in mind SDEDA staff have been attending as many trade shows, conferences, and workshops as possible. The annual SDEDA spring workshop, held last June in Fort San, was another venue in which people could learn more about DED and the Association.

The SDEDA has also been actively meeting with the provincial government to discuss the challenges that we face in winning the fight against DED. Aside from the ever present shortage of funding (we are currently at approximately half the funding level estimated to establish a comprehensive DED program), our main push has been to make changes to the existing DED regulations to, among other things, make it easier to enforce the regulations and to require an endorsement for elm pruners. So far discussions are underway, but the changes are slow to materialize.

Through support from a variety of funders, the SDEDA is pleased to be assisting the Saskatchewan Urban Forest Diversification Program (a Tree Canada project) by purchasing additional tree stock and by offering a related "Tree Care" program for those receiving trees under the program. Sponsors are also allowing the SDEDA to develop a grade four to six school curriculum package titled "There's a Fungus Among Us", with an accompanying poster and activity sheet. The finished product should be ready to go to schools across the province later this year.

Saving our Saskatchewan Elms

Dr. Susan Kaminskyj, Biology Department,
University of Saskatchewan

Now is a good time to review the symptoms of Dutch Elm Disease (DED), which could begin to show in early summer. In particular, watch for wilting, yellowing and curling of all the leaves on apparently undamaged branches. Symptoms develop over days to weeks, and both young and mature trees are susceptible. Call the city at 975-3300 if you suspect DED - there is no cost to you. Wilt diseases other than DED are lethal, too, so the best protection for Saskatoon's urban forest is to get prompt attention from a forester or arborist.

Elm bark beetles are attracted to the scent of freshly cut elm wood, hence the ban on pruning both American and Siberian elms between April 13th and July 31st. After this time, the appearance and future health of your elms can be maintained/improved by removing dead and dying branches. This requires specialized equipment, so it is best (and safest!) to consult an arborist.

Cankerworm Banding - Let's Do it Right! - Richard Kerbes

It is now mid-May and I see cankerworm bands in various states of disrepair on trees in Saskatoon. Some bands have been placed and maintained neatly, but many are a rag-tag collection of weathered transparent plastic and ugly yellow or pink fiberglass. YIKES! By May 15th those bands have served their purpose and they should ALL be removed!

People put bands up for good reason. The experts in tree care say that we need them to reduce the numbers of the female cankerworm moth. The larvae of this

creature can sometimes reach infestation levels, completely devouring a tree's leaves. Furthermore, as the growing worms drift about on their threads they cause a big nuisance to people passing by.

Cankerworm bands have no direct effect in preventing DED, but by reducing the stress of cankerworm infestations, they may reduce the amount of dead branches on an American elm, and thereby reduce its risk of contracting DED.

Tree banding, to be done correctly according to the experts, should be done by early September. The bands will then be ready to catch the flightless female moths as they emerge from the ground to climb up the trunk of the tree to lay their eggs in the upper branches. The band and its sticky surface must be maintained until freeze-up. If it is not sticky, or if it gets covered with leaves etc. which act as bridges, it is useless.

The bands are to be left up all winter, because there is another variety of cankerworm whose female emerges only in spring, once the ground has thawed out. Of course, the band again needs careful repair and maintenance, to ensure that its surface is sticky.

Finally, the experts ask us to remove the bands after the spring females have emerged. To be on the safe side, they say this should not be until about May 15th, to allow for a cold late spring. Consequently, we have to look at these cankerworm bands for almost 8 months of the year. Even worse, many bands are left on even longer, not being removed till July or not at all. That is because some people who put up bands do not understand that they have a responsibility to maintain and to remove them. They seem to forget that a tree is a living creature, and a tight plastic band around it during the growing season is harmful. Furthermore, they don't realize

that if water gets in behind the plastic and into the fiberglass layer, the bark can rot causing permanent damage to the tree.

In regard to the current 8 month or longer eyesore of cankerworm bands, I am proposing to SOS Elms that we should promote a more effective and a more aesthetic approach to canker worm banding, i.e.:

1. Reassess the effectiveness and actual need for mass banding vs. targeting of areas known to have been heavily infected the year before,
2. Canker worm bands should not only be properly applied and maintained, they should also be covered with dark-coloured plastic only (as done on the U of S Campus), which is much less conspicuous than the typical use of transparent wrap which exposes the yellow or pink insulation.

Home Owner's Guide Completed - Glenn Gustafson

I was pleased to work on the SOS Elms project - "Home Owner's Guide to Elm Care and DED Prevention in Saskatoon." This guide was the culmination of an advertising campaign that ran in the Saskatoon Sun last summer and fall under the slogan, "Act now or your elm is as good as DEAD!".

A total of 15,000 of the guides were printed and 13,000 were distributed in March directly to home owners in the older neighborhoods of Saskatoon. The remaining guides have been made available in libraries and leisure centres throughout the city, as well as being used as a handout at trade shows (e.g. Gardenscapes) and by the SDEDA.

Up until now there has been no printed publication like this. This new guide is extremely useful for home owners who have questions about their elms and how to care for them. People who attended Gardenscape were very pleased to obtain this brochure at no cost. It has even caught the eye of many DED practitioners from other areas of the province who also see the need of providing homeowners with more information.

The production of the ads and brochure were funded by SERM, The Saskatoon Foundation, and SOS Elms Coalition. Richard Kerbes and other SOS Elms board members assisted in reviewing and editing. Many thanks to all!

The Guide is now online [here](#).



The American Elm - Not a Dumb Idea - Not Now

The above title appeared in the February, 2001 issue of "Arborist News". The article goes on to say that we should perhaps reconsider our idea of not planting American elms as there are still circumstances where the American elm will outperform many other trees even with DED being present! The basis of this reasoning is that the American elm is such an adaptable tree that is able to endure all types of urban abuses from salt spray to root compaction. In fact, it may be the only tree that will grow in some urban settings. If this is the case American elms still make sense!

