

Ulmus pumila Siberian Elm¹

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INTRODUCTION

This rapidly-growing deciduous tree has a rounded canopy with somewhat drooping branches, and reaches 40 to 60 feet in height with a spread of 35 to 50 feet (Fig. 1). The glossy green, two to three-inch-long by 0.5 to 1-inch-wide leaves turn pale yellow in fall before dropping. The inconspicuous, green, springtime flowers are produced in small clusters among the leaves and are followed by half-inch-long, flat, winged seedpods which mature during early summer. The wood is fairly brittle and subject to damage during storms, which creates a lot of twig litter on the lawn afterward. Since major limbs split from the crotches on older trees, this is considered a tree to avoid. Most urban tree managers and horticulturists will not recommend planting this tree. However, recent observations showed that improper pruning, including topping, may be partially responsible for the tree's weak-wooded reputation.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Ulmus pumila*

Pronunciation: UL-mus PEW-mih-luh

Common name(s): Siberian Elm

Family: *Ulmaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 5 through 9 (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: shade tree

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

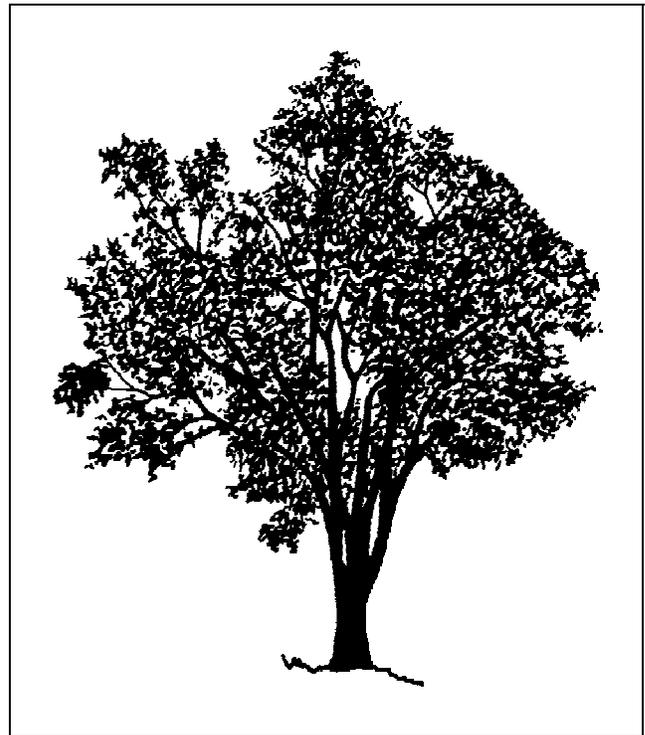


Figure 1. Mature Siberian Elm.

DESCRIPTION

Height: 50 to 70 feet

Spread: 35 to 50 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette

Crown shape: vase shape

Crown density: moderate

Growth rate: fast

Texture: medium

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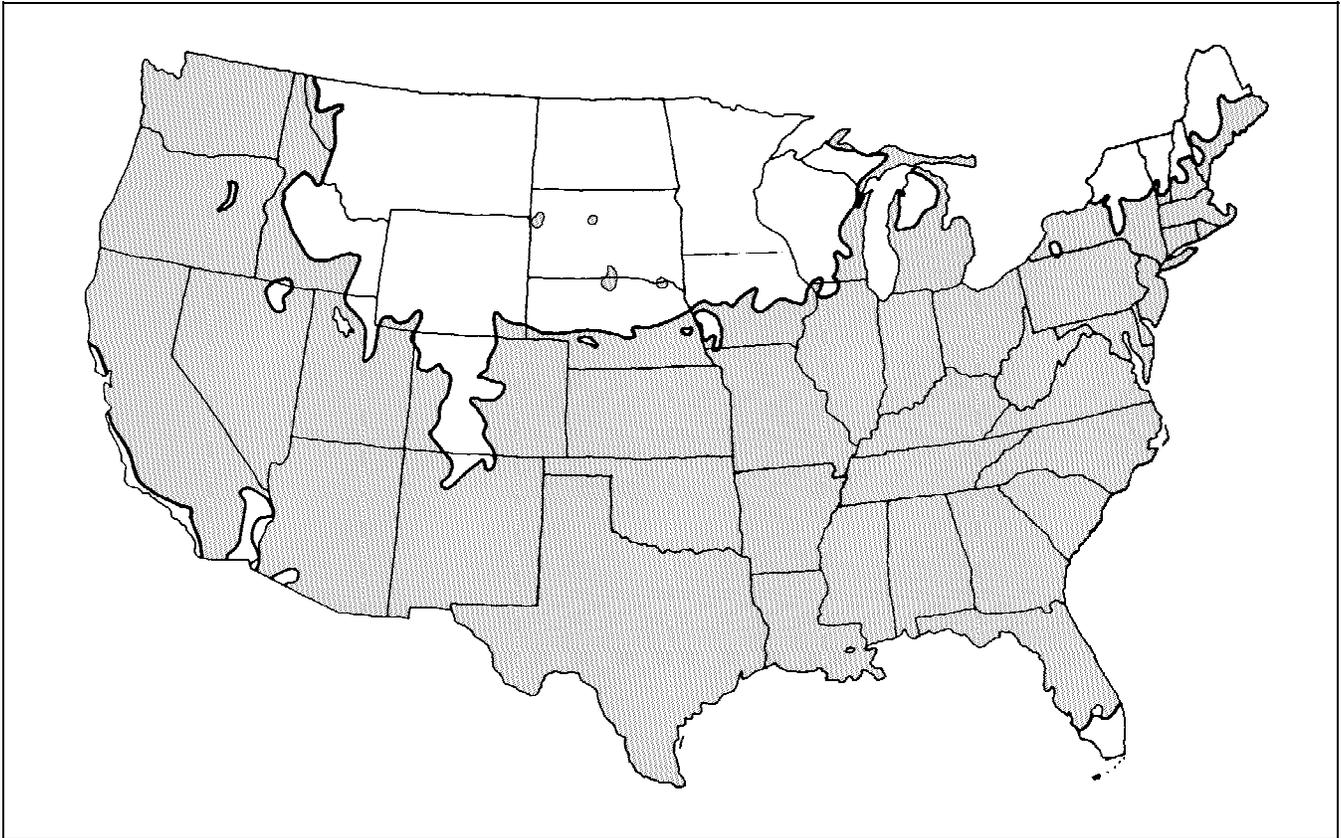


Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: serrate

Leaf shape: elliptic (oval); lanceolate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: yellow

Fall characteristic: showy

Flower

Flower color: green

Flower characteristics: inconspicuous and not showy; spring flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: .5 to 1 inch

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit color: brown

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; inconspicuous and not showy; fruit, twigs, or foliage cause significant litter

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; not particularly showy; should be grown with a single leader; no thorns

Pruning requirement: requires pruning to develop strong structure

Breakage: susceptible to breakage either at the crotch due to poor collar formation, or the wood itself is weak and tends to break

Current year twig color: green; gray

Current year twig thickness: thin

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in full sun

Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; acidic; alkaline; extended flooding; well-drained

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerance: moderate

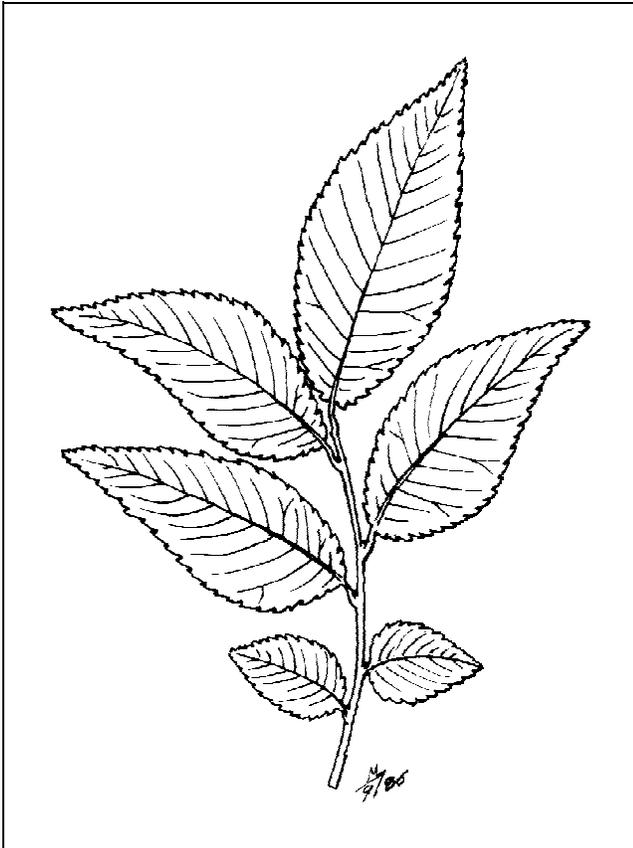


Figure 3. Foliage of Siberian Elm.

Pests

Mites and elm leaf beetles infest this Elm. The tree is considered weak wooded.

Diseases

Wetwood disease can infect the trunk.

Other

Roots: surface roots can lift sidewalks or interfere with mowing

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding tree: not particularly outstanding

Invasive potential: little, if any, potential at this time

Ozone sensitivity: tolerant

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: susceptible

Pest resistance: very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect tree health or aesthetics

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Siberian Elm grows well in full sun on well-drained soil. This tree is easily grown and will tolerate a variety of adverse conditions, such as poor soil, drought, and moderate salt. It is probably best saved for the reclamation site or other out-of-the-way location. It is also useful in climates where many other trees grow poorly. This could include the drier parts of the central United States.

Propagation is by seed or layering.