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## National Elm Trial

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## **Abstract**

Although many Dutch elm disease-resistant elm cultivars are available in the nursery trade, much of the public is hesitant to purchase and plant any elm tree. In order to promote interest in planting these trees, scientific data on growth, form, and pest resistance for existing Dutch elm disease resistant elm cultivars are essential.

## **Keywords**

RFR A1230, Plant Pathology and Microbiology

## **Disciplines**

Agricultural Science | Agriculture | Plant Pathology

## National Elm Trial

### RFR-A1230

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### Introduction

Although many Dutch elm disease-resistant elm cultivars are available in the nursery trade, much of the public is hesitant to purchase and plant any elm tree. In order to promote interest in planting these trees, scientific data on growth, form, and pest resistance for existing Dutch elm disease resistant elm cultivars are essential.

The National Elm Trial is a multi-state effort to evaluate and promote the use of commercially available Dutch elm disease resistant American and hybrid elms. Seventeen elm cultivars are being planted in large replicated trials in a wide range of conditions across the United States so that their growth and performance can be evaluated. Public and private sites in fifteen states are cooperating to evaluate these tree cultivars over a wide range of growing conditions and hardiness zones. The project is coordinated by William Jacobi and James Klett of Colorado State University and James Walla of North Dakota State University. Iowa State University is among the fifteen state cooperators.

The objective of this research was to 1) determine the growth and horticultural performance of commercially available Dutch elm disease resistant elm cultivars in various climate regimes in the United States, 2) determine the relative disease, insect, and abiotic stress tolerance of these cultivars, and

3) promote the propagation and use of elms through local, regional, and national reporting of the trial results to wholesale tree propagators and growers, retail nursery and garden center operators, landscaper designers, arborists, and the general public.

### Materials and Methods

In 2005, elm cultivars 1-14 were planted in April. Varieties 15-16 were planted in May 2006 and variety 17 (Prairie Expedition) was planted in May 2007. Each cultivar is represented by one tree in each of five blocks in a randomized complete block (Figure 1). The elm cultivars represent a range of hybrids and species of *Ulmus* that are commercially available. The trial will be conducted over a period of 10 years.

Annual assessments of each tree were made in October and include height, diameter, and crown characteristics. In addition, the presence of vascular diseases, canker diseases, foliar diseases, scale insect infestations, foliar-feeding insect infestations, bark beetle infestations, and abiotic damages (frost/freeze, wind, winter dieback, sunscald, and insufficient soil moisture) were noted.

### Results and Discussion

Quantitative and qualitative observations are presented in Table 1. Recommendations were based on the arrangement and angles of branches and the overall health and appearance of the tree. Leaf quality put Triumph Morton Glossy as the top recommendation. Vanguard Morton Plainsman and Commendation Morton Stalwart are also highly recommended. Vanguard Morton Plainsman has moderate angles and the twigs on branches are arranged opposite each other and horizontally on a flat plain, giving it an interesting ladder-like

appearance in the fall and winter. Frontier and Emerald Sunshine are not recommended for Iowa because of narrow branch angles, which caused splitting of the main trunk. In addition, 3 of 4 surviving Frontier developed sunscald on the south side of the main trunk. Princeton and Prairie Expedition also performed poorly in comparison with the other cultivars. Homestead, Patriot, Pioneer, Accolade

Morton, Prospector, and New Harmony performed moderately well.

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**Table 1. Cultivar, species, planting date, diameter at 1 ft from ground, breadth of crown, tree height, crown shape, and survival of replicates in October 2012.**

Elm Cultivar	<i>Ulmus</i> species	Plant date	Diam at 1 ft (in.) <sup>c</sup>	Crown breadth (ft) <sup>c</sup>	Height (ft) <sup>c</sup>	Crown shape	Survival (of 5)
Denada Charm Morton Red Tip <sup>b</sup>	<i>U. japonica</i> X <i>U. wilsoniana</i>	2005	D	D	D	D	0
Triumph Morton Glossy <sup>a</sup>	<i>U. pumila</i> X <i>U. japonica</i> X <i>U. wilsoniana</i>	2005	10.8 ab	23.2 b-d	29.3 a-c	vase	5
Homestead	<i>U. glabra</i> X <i>U. carpinifolia</i> X <i>U. pumila</i>	2005	8.3 c-f	21.0 c-e	31.8 ab	oval	4
Patriot	( <i>U. glabra</i> X <i>U. carpinifolia</i> X <i>U. pumila</i> ) X <i>U. wilsoniana</i>	2005	9.5 b-d	25.0 a-c	34.4 a	pyramid	4
Emerald Sunshine <sup>b</sup>	<i>U. propinqua</i>	2005	8.3 c-f	12.5 gh	22.5 d	vase many side shoots	2
Commendation Morton Stalwart <sup>a</sup>	<i>U. carpinifolia</i> X <i>U. pumila</i> X <i>U. wilsoniana</i>	2005	12.2 a	28.0 a	32.9 ab	round	5
Vanguard Morton Plainsman <sup>a</sup>	<i>U. pumila</i> X <i>U. japonica</i>	2005	10.4 a-c	26.0 ab	30.0 a-c	round	5
Frontier <sup>b</sup>	<i>U. carpinifolia</i> X <i>U. parvifolia</i>	2005	6.9 ef	15.0 f-h	23.5 d	conical	4
Pioneer	<i>U. glabra</i> X <i>U. carpinifolia</i>	2005	7.9 d-f	20.3 de	27.6 b-d	vase	4
New Horizon <sup>b</sup>	<i>U. pumila</i> X <i>U. japonica</i>	2005	D	D	D	D	0
Accolade Morton	<i>U. japonica</i> X <i>U. wilsoniana</i>	2005	8.4 c-e	21.0 c-e	25.8 cd	round/ vase	5
Prospector	<i>U. wilsoniana</i>	2005	9.0 b-e	24.0 a-d	27.5 b-d	round	5
Valley Forge <sup>b</sup>	<i>U. americana</i>	2005	D	D	D	D	0
New Harmony	<i>U. americana</i>	2006	6.1 f	11.8 h	27.3 b-d	pyramid	5
Princeton <sup>b</sup>	<i>U. americana</i>	2006	8.7 b-e	17.8 ef	30.0 a-c	vase	4
Prairie Expedition <sup>b</sup>	<i>U. americana</i>	2007	3.0 g	16.5 e-g	15.5 e	round, asymmetrical	2

<sup>a</sup>Recommended for Central Iowa.  
<sup>b</sup>Not recommended for Central Iowa.  
<sup>c</sup>Means in a column followed by the same letters are not significantly different (P < 0.05) D denotes dead.

Figure 1. Map of Elm Trial at the ISU Horticultural Station.

