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## Elm disease forces the removal of seven University-area trees

By Carol McCauley  
Of the Emerald

Seven American elm trees have been cut down in the West-University neighborhood, and eight more have been confirmed as diseased, said Jeff Hale, city arborist.

The culprit is ceratocystis ulmi, the fungus of Dutch elm disease.

"It's a fungus that's carried from tree to tree, either by a vector, which is the smaller European bark beetle, or the native bark beetle, and by natural root grass between two trees," said Bob McBride, Dutch elm disease coordinator for the Eugene Parks Services Division.

"The fungus grows in the water conducting cells, so the tree actually dies from lack of moisture," he said.

The disease is newly discovered in Eugene, with the first diseased tree found during a routine job inspection in June, McBride said.

"I realized it was American elm. Not too many things kill American elm," he said.

The Parks Services Division is trying to confine the area of diseased elms between the University campus and Mill Street, Hale said.

"The impact in Eugene is going to be fairly minimal because it's only a small percentage of our tree population," McBride said. "Our major concentration is trying to quarantine everything that's here in this town." Elm trees comprise less than one percent of the trees in Eugene, he said.

No one knows why the disease showed up in Eugene, but it usually spreads through diseased plant material brought in from another area, McBride said.

"Firewood is really one of the biggest ones," he said.

Hale and McBride agreed that the disease seems to be contained now. But it could endanger the existing elms in Eugene, McBride said.

"In the essence of the elm population, yeah, it could definitely wipe it out. Our major concentration of elms in town is right there along Agate Street."

Rebecca Werner said she is worried about the elms in her front yard on Patterson Street. An elm near her yard was removed Monday morning.

"It definitely is of some concern because they do shade the whole front of the house here, and one of the reasons I moved in was because it's real shady," she said.

Symptoms of the disease include flagging, in which leaves fall from the crown of the tree leaving the remaining leaves to "kind of look like flags in the wind," McBride said.

Other signs include yellowing, browning, curling and wilting of the leaves, he said. "Those are the physical things you can see from the ground," he said.

"We are inventorying all elm species in town and mapping them, and once we find those, we monitor them," McBride said. Elm tree samples are sent to the Department of

Agriculture in Salem, and a confirmation of the disease takes seven to 10 days, he said.

The length of time for the disease to take hold of the elm varies, although they are most susceptible from spring to summer, McBride said.

"Any tree that has been infected in early spring or early summer can die within that summertime," McBride said. "Any tree that has been infected, say, late summer, August, early September, will usually not show signs until the following spring. But some trees can die branch by branch over a two-, three-, four-year period. Some can go within two months."

Brad Jostock was surprised to find that the elms in the yard of his Patterson apartment complex had been removed when he moved in Aug. 1.

"It was really a shocker because when I looked at the place, it was really wonderful and shady. And then when I came back to move my stuff in, they were gone. It really broke my heart," he said.

Public attitude generally has been positive toward efforts to fight the disease, McBride said, partially because some residents have seen the disease before in other parts of the country.

"They've been through this once before. They know the type of devastation that can occur," he said. "There's no cure for the disease, so once a tree has got it, there's nothing to do really but cut it down."

Measures can be taken to prevent the spread of the disease, he said. It's important to prevent any wood from a diseased elm from leaving the area, he said.

"The proper disposal is either by burning or burying all plant material," he said.

Diseased trees will be replaced with new American elms probably in early spring, McBride said.

After tests were made two weeks ago on an elm outside Eugene's Flower Home, Manager Laurie Brooks-Headley said the Parks Services Division called and said the tree had to come down. It was removed Monday morning.

"You hate to see it go, but there's nothing you can do about it," she said.

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