
The Stately American Elm

We recently planted twenty three new trees around the horse arena on the south edge of the Gage County Fairgrounds. They were bare root trees from a Nebraska nursery and we appear to be off to a good start. The trees selected included: Red Oak, London Plane Tree (sycamore), American Linden, Flowering Crab, Kentucky Coffee Tree, and Pioneer Elm.

Is Pioneer Elm the Return of the American Elm?

The American Elm has never left. Nebraska deserted it as a state tree and replaced it with the Cottonwood. There are still plenty of American Elms around. The problem is that Dutch Elm Disease is also still around. We see American Elms in woodland pastures and fence rows growing well and doing a great job for ten or fifteen or even twenty years until Dutch Elm Disease wipes them out and a new crop has to begin again.

In the nursery trade there are offerings of American Elms. Liberty, Valley Forge, Washington, and Jefferson are some of the cultivars. The verdict is still out on these, but so far it appears they are more resistant to Dutch Elm Disease, but are not immune. Some day we will find immunity. It has to be out there somewhere if the gene for gene theory is correct. This theory says that for any gene in an infectious agent there is a gene to block or counter act that infection.

The two most promising American Elm-like trees in the nursery trade today are Pioneer Elm and Accolade Elm. Accolade is a complex crossed selection form Asian Elm species. It will achieve a mature height of seventy feet with a sixty foot crown. It is suited to our planting zone. Accolade is a vase shaped tree with arching limbs similar to the American Elm. The leaves are glossy and dark green and the foliage is somewhat resistant to the feeding of the elm leaf beetle which riddles the leaves of chinese/siberian elms we have growing in the area.

Pioneer Elm is a selected cross of two species of European Elms. Pioneer Elm has a rounded shape and will gain a height of fifty feet and a spread width about the same. The dark green foliage in a few years will shade the 4-H Horse participant families and change to yellow in the fall. The Pioneer Elm combines the fast growth of the strength to withstand the challenging Nebraska conditions.

The City of Beatrice crews, including the west-side windmill artist, Terrance Moore, removed over 16,000 American Elms from the City in the 1960's and 70's. Let us hope that these look-alike replacements today and a truly resistant American Elm tomorrow can bring the glory of the American Elm back to the people of Nebraska.

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