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The American Elm and its New Cultivars

By Bill Meyer, WSU Senior Groundskeeper (Retired)

At one time the stately American elm was the dominant street tree that lined boulevards throughout the United States. Many will remember how elm trees graced streets throughout Winona for many years. The near perfect vase-like shape created a cathedral effect as trees on both sides of a street arched to the sky. Then the dreaded Dutch elm disease killed millions of trees.

Today, 19 cultivars of elm are highly resistant to Dutch elm disease. Cultivars such as 'Regal,' 'Dynasty,' 'Accolade,' 'Homestead,' and 'Valley Forge' are available as a viable option to the American elm. These new disease resistant elms belong to four main groups: Chinese Elm, Asian Elm, European and European-Asian hybrids, and American Elm. WSU's Homestead Elm is a complex hybrid originating from the European-Eurasian cultivars.

Homestead Elm was developed by the United States National Arboretum and released to the public in 1984.

The tree produces an upright oval form with arching branches. It is fast growing and tolerant of most soils. It grows straight and tall, requiring little pruning. The dark green foliage stays green late into fall, unlike the other elms.

WSU's Homestead Elm was originally planted about 15 years ago on Huff Street near Lucas Hall. After a number of years at that site, excavation for a new bus stop required transplanting of the tree. The Homestead Elm handled the move well and now resides on the edge of a grassy knoll located just southeast of Baldwin Lounge in Kryzsko Commons.

(Excerpt from "Campus of Trees Winona State University" by Bill Meyer & Tom Grier)