

# MACALESTER COLLEGE

SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA 55105

■ DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY

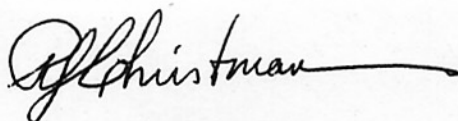
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Subject: The ELMS at ORDWAY.

It is easy to overlook the fact that the American Elm (Ulmus americana) is a tree of the wetlands and is "at home" in riparian habitats. There in the river bottoms the ground is subjected to annual floodings and conditions are conducive to a whole community of plants quite different from the parks and boulevards where we are accustomed to seeing this singularly majestic plant. On the low peninsula which forms the eastern confines of River Lake the elms grow in profusion along with other typical wetland trees - Willows, Cottonwoods. There is a cousin elm, the Red or Slippery Elm (U. rubra) which also is common in the low-lying areas. The elms constitute perhaps one-fourth of the trees in this particular habitat and are most prolific, producing their small round windborne seeds by the many thousands each year as most city-dwellers who have parked their cars on the elm-lined boulevards know.

The current plight of the American Elm is that of being doomed to death by disease and this applies equally to those "wild" trees in the river bottoms. One need think for only a moment on the facts of the Dutch elm disease and he is impressed by the enormity of the task of removing every diseased tree which might appear in the widespread bottomlands of the Mississippi and other Midwest rivers. An ecological disaster has struck us all.

Each year's autumnal color changes find the yellows and yellow-browns of the Elms splashing across the landscape to mingle with the yellow-greens and bright yellows of the Cottonwoods and Willows and followed by the more rich and sombre reds and browns of the Oaks. There is something very attractive about the leaf of this stately tree, small and ovate with its double-toothed edges, filling out the graceful lines of the tree's vase-shaped contours, giving the plentiful shade which has made it such a favorite with most of us. The scored bark of its trunk, too, is a study in rugged harmony - and also a favorite pantry for Jays and Nuthatches, who hide sunflower seeds in the rough bark surface, often hammering with their beaks to wedge the flat seeds in for future provender.



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