



# *Ulmus pumila* Siberian Elm<sup>1</sup>

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson<sup>2</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

This rapidly-growing deciduous tree has a rounded canopy with somewhat drooping branches, and reaches 40 to 60 feet in height with a spread of 35 to 50 feet (Fig. 1). The glossy green, two to three-inch-long by 0.5 to 1-inch-wide leaves turn pale yellow in fall before dropping. The inconspicuous, green, springtime flowers are produced in small clusters among the leaves and are followed by half-inch-long, flat, winged seedpods which mature during early summer. The wood is fairly brittle and subject to damage during storms, which creates a lot of twig litter on the lawn afterward. Since major limbs split from the crotches on older trees, this is considered a tree to avoid. Most urban tree managers and horticulturists will not recommend planting this tree. However, recent observations showed that improper pruning, including topping, may be partially responsible for the tree's weak-wooded reputation.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scientific name:** *Ulmus pumila*

**Pronunciation:** UL-mus PEW-mih-luh

**Common name(s):** Siberian Elm

**Family:** *Ulmaceae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 5 through 9 (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** shade tree

**Availability:** somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

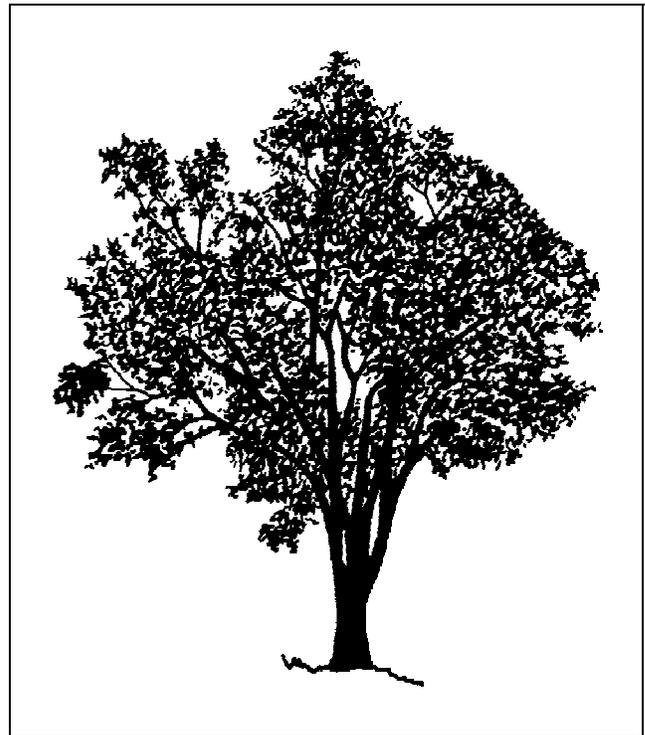


Figure 1. Mature Siberian Elm.

## DESCRIPTION

**Height:** 50 to 70 feet

**Spread:** 35 to 50 feet

**Crown uniformity:** irregular outline or silhouette

**Crown shape:** vase shape

**Crown density:** moderate

**Growth rate:** fast

**Texture:** medium

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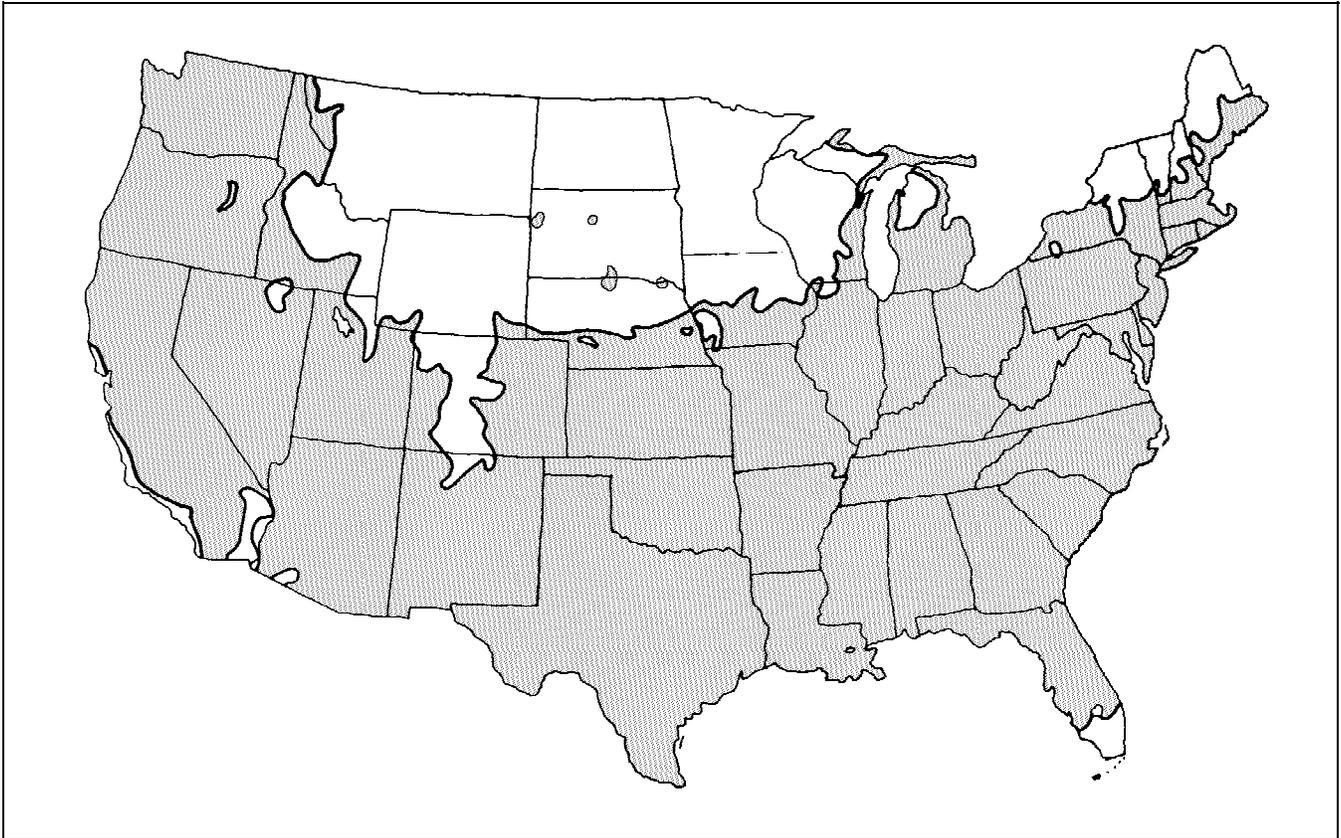


Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

### Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** serrate

**Leaf shape:** elliptic (oval); lanceolate

**Leaf venation:** pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous

**Leaf blade length:** less than 2 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** yellow

**Fall characteristic:** showy

### Flower

**Flower color:** green

**Flower characteristics:** inconspicuous and not showy; spring flowering

### Fruit

**Fruit shape:** round

**Fruit length:** .5 to 1 inch

**Fruit covering:** dry or hard

**Fruit color:** brown

**Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; inconspicuous and not showy; fruit, twigs, or foliage cause significant litter

### Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; not particularly showy; should be grown with a single leader; no thorns

**Pruning requirement:** requires pruning to develop strong structure

**Breakage:** susceptible to breakage either at the crotch due to poor collar formation, or the wood itself is weak and tends to break

**Current year twig color:** green; gray

**Current year twig thickness:** thin

### Culture

**Light requirement:** tree grows in full sun

**Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; acidic; alkaline; extended flooding; well-drained

**Drought tolerance:** high

**Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate

**Soil salt tolerance:** moderate

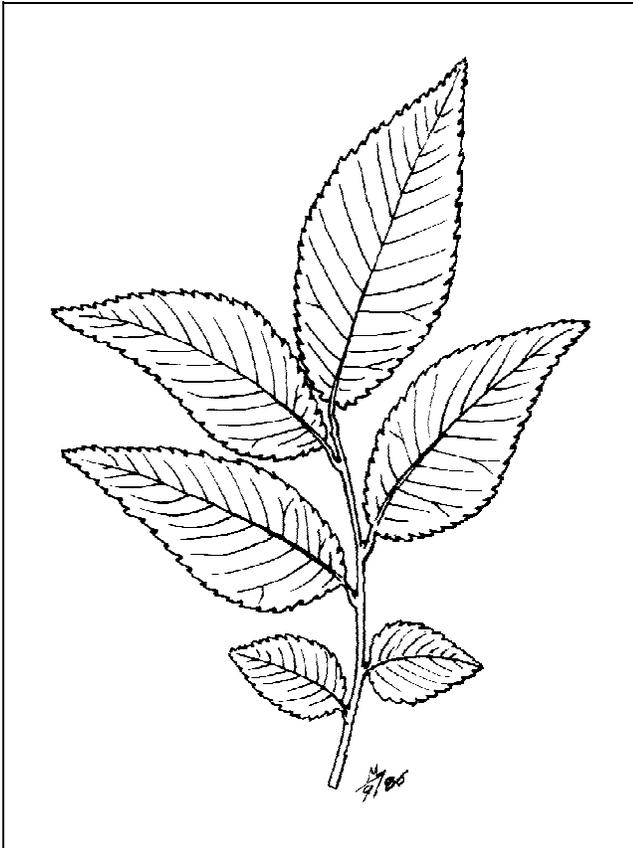


Figure 3. Foliage of Siberian Elm.

### Pests

Mites and elm leaf beetles infest this Elm. The tree is considered weak wooded.

### Diseases

Wetwood disease can infect the trunk.

### Other

**Roots:** surface roots can lift sidewalks or interfere with mowing

**Winter interest:** no special winter interest

**Outstanding tree:** not particularly outstanding

**Invasive potential:** little, if any, potential at this time

**Ozone sensitivity:** tolerant

**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** susceptible

**Pest resistance:** very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect tree health or aesthetics

### USE AND MANAGEMENT

Siberian Elm grows well in full sun on well-drained soil. This tree is easily grown and will tolerate a variety of adverse conditions, such as poor soil, drought, and moderate salt. It is probably best saved for the reclamation site or other out-of-the-way location. It is also useful in climates where many other trees grow poorly. This could include the drier parts of the central United States.

Propagation is by seed or layering.