



SPECIAL REPORT 14

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**DUTCH ELM DISEASE AND  
COMMUNITY DECISIONS**



*Elms are one of the most common shade trees in Minnesota. They beautify many Minnesota communities, provide shade, and lower the temperature on hot sunny days. The presence of these beautiful trees increases property values, whether in cities, suburbs, towns, or villages. But unless communities take action to protect their elms, populations of these trees may be seriously depleted or even wiped out entirely by Dutch elm disease.*

**THE FACTS**

Dutch elm disease was first identified in Minnesota in 1961. Through 1964, 87 cases had been identified in Monticello, 11 in St. Paul, 8 in Minneapolis, and 1 in South St. Paul. To the south, in Iowa, Dutch elm disease was first found in 1957. Spread there has been so rapid that the rate of confirmed county infestation has increased each year.

Experiences in states to the east indicate that it is not possible to escape an invasion of this disease.

This report is not intended to give the reader complete details about Dutch elm disease and its carriers. This information may be found in Extension Folder 211, "The Dutch Elm Disease."

**THE CHOICES**

With Dutch elm disease on the way, the valuable elm trees which beautify a community represent a liability as well as an asset. It will cost money if no protective measures are taken and elm trees are allowed to die. It will also cost money to fight Dutch elm disease with a sanitation and chemical protection program. Such a program, however, will protect our elms and maintain the value of real estate.

Based on the experiences of some midwestern cities, it has been shown that over a 10-year period, a

*Adapted by Herbert G. Johnson, professor and extension plant pathologist, by permission of the Cooperative Extension Service, Iowa State University, Ames, from Pamphlet 308 (revised), June 1965.*

sanitation and chemical protection program need cost but little more than doing nothing except removing diseased trees as they die. Such a program can save up to 80 percent of the elms. And the community can budget this program at a steady rate. The cost of tree removal is small at the beginning when the disease is just starting, and at the end when only a few elms are left. During the middle 5 of the 10 years, costs are very high (table 8).

At the end of 10 years, it is believed that all unprotected elms surrounding the community will be dead. Therefore, the principal source of disease inoculum would be nonexistent. When this occurs, chemical protection can be discontinued and only sanitation practiced. The possibility does exist that continued chemical protection and sanitation may be the only way to maintain protection after this period. There is also a possibility that a much lower cost type of control may be developed during this period of time.

**In View of the Problem, City Governments Have These Alternatives:**

- 1) Remove the dead elms and replant to a variety of species.
- 2) Control the disease by sanitation and chemical protection.

FIRST, each community concerned should make a thorough, accurate tree survey to determine the number of elms and other trees, their condition and value.