PORTLAND PARKS & RECREATION℠
Healthy Parks, Healthy Portland

About Dutch Elm Disease
Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is Dutch Elm Disease?
A: Dutch Elm Disease (DED) is a fungal infection which affects American and European elm trees, including those in Portland. It is highly contagious between trees and is lethal. While DED poses no health risk to humans or animals, the fungus which causes the disease clogs the vascular tissue of elms, prohibiting water from moving throughout the tree and potentially causing it to die in a matter of weeks. The disease is named after the Dutch scientists who isolated and identified the fungus. It is thought to have originated in Asia, but is prevalent in the United States, having first presented in Ohio in 1930, and in Portland in 1977. Infected trees must be cut down and their wood destroyed to prevent further transmission of the disease to other elm trees. DED does not impact trees of other species.

Q: What does DED look like in a tree?
A: The most prominent symptom you can see is known as "flagging," a sudden wilting or drooping of leaves in the tree, often on a single branch or limb. Flagging leaves quickly turn from grey-green to brown as the fungus invades the vascular tissue of the tree, blocking the tree's water supply. Because fresh pruning wounds attract the elm bark beetle, elm pruning is restricted during times of beetle activity, which is April 15th through October 15th. Also, the state of Oregon has declared an emergency quarantine of all elm wood; elm wood must be chipped, or de-barked and buried, and cannot be stored for firewood. Portland Urban Forestry crews monitor the approximate 3,500 public elm trees in the city to look for signs of DED. An Oregon State University laboratory is used to confirm suspected cases at no cost to adjacent property owner.

Q: How does DED spread?
A: There are three ways the DED fungus spreads: bark beetles, root grafts, and human activity. In infected trees, spores of the DED fungus stick to the backs of bark beetles and are transported to new elms when beetles emerge in the spring and fly off to feed on healthy elms. The fungus spreads most rapidly through root grafts, which form between trees growing in close proximity. Human activity, such as transporting elm wood infested with bark beetles, also spreads the disease.

Q: Can DED be prevented?
A: Fungicide can be injected into elm trees as a preventative treatment. A certified arborist must supervise the fungicide injection procedure. Save Our Elms and affiliates, and local nonprofit organizations, bring communities together to fundraise, inoculate elm trees, and replant trees that have been removed due to Dutch Elm Disease. The City inoculates elm trees in parks (not street trees) to prevent them from contracting Dutch Elm Disease, and will continue to do so to protect these precious resources. Even so, inoculation is not always 100% effective against Dutch Elm Disease

Q: I am confident, or suspect that a street tree next to my property may have DED. What do I do?
A: Contact Urban Forestry at 503-823-TREE (8733) or by email at trees@portlandoregon.gov. Indicate the location of the tree and provide any photos if possible. Urban Forestry will send a staff person to assess, as soon as resources permit. PP&R has a designated person on staff to monitor elm trees (for at least the 2017-2018 Fiscal Year).

Q: Who is responsible for the cost of removing street trees, including trees infected with DED?
A: Homeowners are responsible for addressing all tree issues and removal of trees in adjacent rights-of-way to their property. As of July 1, 2017 Portland City Policy became consistent regarding a homeowner responsibility for taking care of *all* tree issues. If an elm tree on the right-of-way adjacent to a homeowner's property is found to have Dutch Elm Disease, Portland Urban Forestry will contact the private property owner and notify them of the needed steps to mitigate the problem. Consistent with all other street tree issues on adjacent rights-of-way, the homeowner is the responsible party.

Q: How much will removal of an infected street elm cost me as a homeowner?
A: Each situation varies due to location, tree age and structure, nearby buildings, and other factors. Large elm trees have been known to cost around $3000 to remove. However, each tree situation is unique. Homeowners should consult a certified arborist to learn more about their specific circumstances.

Q: As of July 1, 2017, the City reallocated funds previously used to remove DED-infected trees. How exactly is this money being used now?
A: Through the City budget process, resources were shifted to address tree care equitably and citywide. This shift gives needed attention to other trees, including around 150 Heritage Trees in Portland parks and within City rights-of-way which were not previously maintained due to a lack of resources. The shift in resources frees up approximately five months of work (approximately 80 full work days equaling $230,000 in taxpayer money) which can now be dedicated to tree pruning, maintenance, and extended care of public trees across Portland.

Q: Will the City continue to monitor and/or inoculate elm trees for Dutch Elm Disease?
A: Yes. The City will continue the practice of inoculating elm trees in parks and natural areas only (not street trees) to prevent them from contracting and spreading Dutch Elm Disease.

Per City Code, Urban Forestry will continue DED testing of all trees. If DED is found in an elm, homeowners will be required to remove the tree within a timely manner to halt the spread of the highly contagious fungus.

Q: What has the City done in response to DED?
A: The City of Portland has an Urban Forestry Management Strategy. It includes a five-pronged approach which includes:

- Monitoring for the disease (by a designated specialist)
- Rapid removal of impacted trees
- Sanitation (disposing of all elm wood in a controlled manner)
- Inoculation (Urban Forestry continues to inoculate approximately 140 elm trees annually within parks and natural areas)
- Education and outreach.

Q: Why is this such a big deal in Portland? What kind of numbers are we talking about?
A: Portland has one of the most impressive elm canopies in the country. Stately elms line several neighborhoods and destinations, including the popular South Park Blocks, Eastmoreland and Laurelhurst neighborhoods.

Urban Forestry estimates that Portland loses 1% of its elm population each year to DED. Elm tree removals from DED peaked in 1999 with 208 infected trees removed. 2016 saw 55 tree removals, down slightly from the 65 in 2015. Since the disease was identified in Portland, around 1268 elm trees total have had to be cut down and destroyed as a result of DED.

Q: Which specific tree species are susceptible to Dutch Elm Disease?
A: American elms, Dutch elms, English elms, Wych elms, Camperdown elms, and Smoothleaf elms.

Q: Are *any* elm trees okay to plant in Portland?
A: Yes, some new elm species are resistant to DED and are approved to plant. In fact, these new elm species are frequently used to replace elms that have been removed. Here is a link to lists of approved street tree species and plantings: https://www.portlandoregon.gov/trees/60043

Q: Where are most of Portland's elm trees located?
A: You will find elm trees mostly concentrated in neighborhoods such as Laurelhurst, Eastmoreland, South Park Blocks, Ladd's Addition, and parts of Northwest Portland. Please refer to the map below to view these neighborhood locations.

Neighborhoods in Portland with Large Elm Populations

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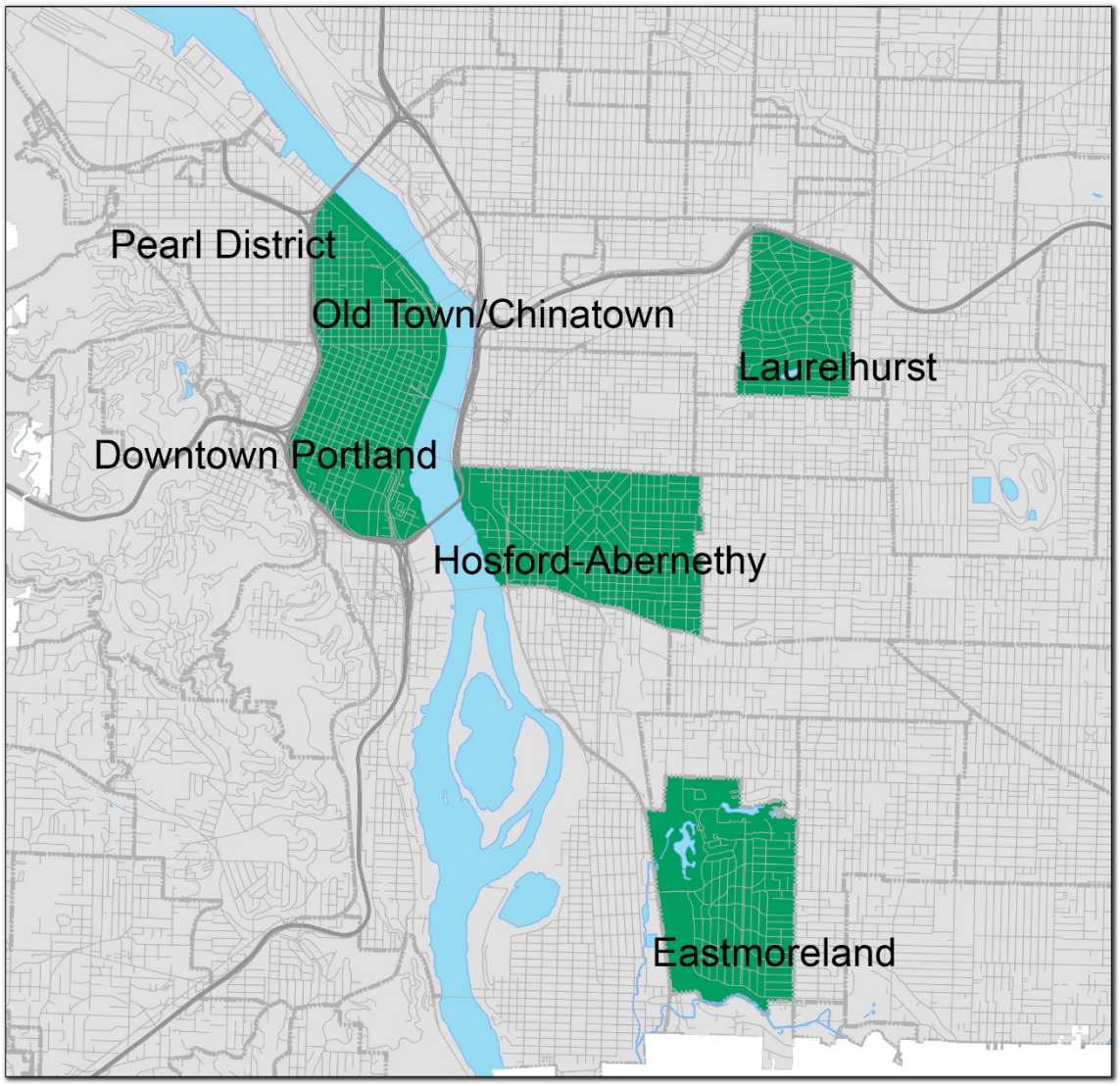

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