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The Green Thumb

By GEORGE ABRAHAM

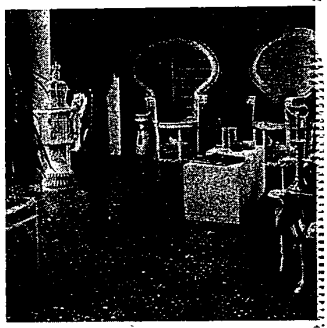
Is the elm doomed? There's an organization called "Elms Unlimited" which is doing a great job trying to save the elm tree. This group is confident it can lick the dreaded Dutch elm disease. Elm Misfire, don't be misled into thinking that infected elms can be saved or cured by certain techniques or chemicals. To date, there is no cure. By the time the elm shows symptoms (wilting, yellowing, and dieback) the Xylem (pronounced Zy-lem) or water-conducting pipes are largely plugged with brown gummy substances, plus budding yeast-like spores of the Dutch elm fungus.

Nothing can be done to break up this conglomeration. As for "cures," did you know that over 30,000 of them have been reported and not a single one has worked.

The list includes: ordinary table salt, turpentine, aspirin, fertilizers with "positive ions" (what are they? - I don't know), zinc-coated or copper nails, styrene, formaldehyde, lime, vinegar, tobacco decoctions, Chinese elm sap, crank-case oil, onion and garlic juice, to name a few. These are all useless.

Beware of unscrupulous, door-to-door "tree doctors" who claim they have a magic cure to save your tree. No cure has proven effective by state or federal researchers where elms are treated and inoculated deliberately with the Dutch elm disease fungus, before or after treatment.

The fast-growing Siberian elm (*Ulmus pumila*) and the Chinese elm (*U. parvifolia*) are brittle, but have a high degree of resistance to the disease. Let's hope we get a resistant type by crossing and hybridizing.



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Construction Damage To Shrubs, Shade Trees Can Be Prevented

EAST LANSING—Mature shade trees and shrubs add much to the immediate value of a newly completed home or building, says Joseph T. Cox, Michigan State University extension landscape architect.

When giving the building a more complete landscaped look with better scale and proportion than newly planted trees and shrubs," he says, "Many existing plants are worth the effort to protect from injury."

Cox advises the home builder to include the protection of trees and shrubs in the specifications before letting the building contract. He offers the following suggestions:

To prevent construction materials from being stored too close to a tree, erect a board- or grate structure about 10 feet square around the tree.

To prevent machinery from damaging the bark, wrap one inch boards of varying widths around the tree trunk. Weave them together with wire, but don't nail them to the tree.

Where you want to save groups of smaller trees or shrubs, use snow fence, supported by steel posts, to screen off the whole area.

SELDOM should a plant be elevated more than two feet. If this is necessary, build a retaining wall to hold the soil around the plant roots.

If space is available, let the tree remain on a gently sloping mound. Ground covers can be planted on mound slopes that would be difficult to mow.

When making a major fill (over eight inches in depth) install a series of spokelike tile lines centered at the base of the tree or shrub before adding fill. This will enable the plant to "breathe." On erect a circular retaining wall to hold the fill away from the base of the tree trunk.

Coleus roots fine in plain top water. Some people root them in a pot of soil, and place a plastic bag over the pot and all. Tie it shut to trap moisture inside. About a week later, remove the bag as the cutting will be rooted. You can also start coleus from seed. Remember, it likes plenty of heat (80 degrees F) and ample moisture.

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