

Ulmaceae

elm family

Eighteen genera comprise this family, including 150 species. A single genus and species is native to Nova Scotia. Several European species are widely planted and often seen, especially in urban landscapes.

Clusters of small, perfect flowers appear in early spring. The calyx has 4–9 lobes with as many stamens. Petals are absent. Leaves are simple, alternately arranged and doubly-serrate. Ours produce samaras.

Elms in NS are easily identified in leaf, as the leaf base is asymmetric on either side of the midvein.

Ulmus L.

Elm

North-temperate trees, elms have slender reddish brown winter twigs, which may or may not be pubescent. Terminal buds are absent. Leaf buds are more slender than floral buds. Bark is rough, darkly gray and deeply furrowed with crisscrossing ridges at maturity. Flowers are pendulous, purple or yellow in lateral clusters. Fruit is a widely ovate samara, greenish until mature, when it turns papery brown.

Ulmus americana L.

American Elm; White Elm; orme d'Amérique



Photo by Marian Munro

It is a tall stately tree at maturity with a mushroom-shaped canopy. Leaves are variable, but generally ovate and acute, with coarsely serrated margins. Leaf bases are unequal on either side of the midvein. Samaras are about 1cm long, winged and ciliate.

Flowers from March to early May.

Streamsides, intervals and terraces. This species is much less common than formerly due to the introduction and infestation of Dutch Elm Disease.

Scattered northward from central counties.

NS to SK, south to WY, TX and FL.



Ulmus glabra
Photo by Marian Munro

Several European species have been introduced as ornamentals in the past, such as English Elm and Scotch Elm. Their susceptibility to Dutch Elm disease excludes their spread from cultivation, such that they are rarely seen outside of the urban setting.

English Elm has more tendency to spread and may be expected in the Annapolis Valley. Scotch Elm, with its obovate leaves rarely escapes. Its samaras have smooth margins.



Ulmus minor var. suberosa
Photo by Gerry Waldron

Ulmus minor Mill. var. *suberosa* (Moench) Rehd. was recently collected near Clementsport, Annapolis Co. This is a variant of the European field elm. It has nearly glabrous, thin twigs with glabrous bud scales (at least the lower) that have ciliate margins. The leaves are smooth above and ciliate only on the main veins below. This is a new record for the province and possibly of the continent, as an escape.