

# Weed Information Sheet:

## Siberian elm

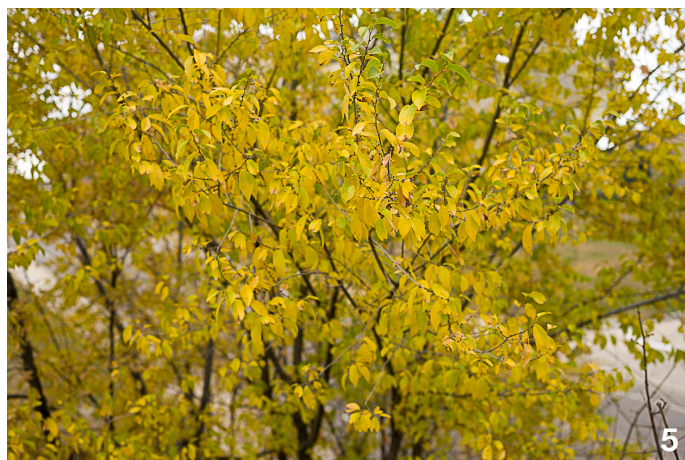
*Ulmus pumila*

### Identification:

### Ulmaceae (Elm family)

**Common** Perennial tree, deciduous **Height:** to 80' **Width:** to 50' **Leaf Arrangement:** alternate  
**Flower:** Yellow, Red, Green **Blooms:** Early spring **Fruit:** Samara **Fall Color:** Yellow, Green

The leaves of Siberian elm look very similar to native elms except that they are smaller, less than 3" long (though some hybrids may have larger leaves), have a single tooth margin, and the base of the leaves is largely symmetrical. Our native American and red elm leaves are usually longer than 3", have doubly-serrated margins and the bases are notably asymmetrical. Leaves are arranged alternately on their branches. Seeds have round, winged flaps called samaras around them. They develop in clusters on the tree around the time of leaf-out, and flutter down individually. Under open conditions the Siberian elm can grow to 80 ft. in height. The brittle branch and regular sprouting around the trunk cause most Siberian elms to have an irregular shape. These trees often have numerous dead branches. Bark of mature trees is rigid (not corky), with prominent ridges and furrows, and is tannish-grey, but sometimes stained black or white by sap draining from wounds. Fall color is typically a sickly yellowish green, though occasionally they will turn an almost pleasant greenish-yellow, finally littering the ground with these dreary shades well-after most trees drop their leaves.



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**RED HEAD** Ecological Consulting

## Siberian elm

*Ulmus pumila*

AKA: hybrid elm



**NR-40 Restricted**

### Description & Impact:

Siberian Elm is native to northern China, eastern Siberia, and Korea. They were first brought to the U.S. in the 1860s, and commonly used as windbreaks during the Dustbowl era. Siberian elm is often seen growing along roads, in rangeland, pastures, and old fence-lines, but they seed readily into adjacent open sites, especially in dryer soils. They were occasionally used as ornamental trees after the outbreak of Dutch Elm Disease killed many American elms. Though they grow fast, their weak wood and tendency to drop large branches makes them a poor choice for placement near structures. According to Michael Dirr, author of *A Manual of Woody Plants*, Siberian elm is "...one of, if not the world's worst, tree."

### Control Methods:

**Organic:** Seedlings can be mowed. Hand pulling of seedlings is also effective. Larger saplings can be pulled with the aid of a weed wrench, or use a sharp shovel or Parsnip Predator to sever the tap root several inches below the surface. Siberian elm will readily resprout when cut. A method that may prevent this would be to tie a heavy-duty black plastic around the stump, or cover with a weighted bucket, and leave in place for 2 growing seasons. Otherwise, repeated cutting of resprouts immediately after they appear will be needed for several seasons. Girdling, if done correctly, may also be effective.

**Chemical:** After cutting the tree down, treat the stump with solution of triclopyr (Garlon® 4, etc.) in oil, or glyphosate (Round-Up®, etc.) in water. Triclopyr can also be for a basal bark treatment, especially for smaller plants, under 8" in diameter. Always read herbicide labels carefully before use and always apply herbicide according to the product label.

**Revegetation Recommendations:** Bur oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*) white pine (*Pinus strobus*) and many other native trees will make a better windbreak than Siberian elm. In the home landscape, hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*) is a vigorous tree with similar form. Also consider ironwood (*Ostrya virginiana*) and sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*). There are now a few varieties of American elm (*Ulmus americana*) which are resistant to Dutch Elm disease to consider as well.

### Citations: