

The Camperdown Elms

BY GEOFF HOGAN

A friend of mine asked me a question recently regarding Camperdown Elms. These are among the most unique ornamental trees that we have on the Island - and some of the oldest. Camperdown Elm, otherwise known as Ulmus glabra 'Camperdownii', are those strangely sculptured, pendulous trees seen mostly in the larger urban centers on the Island. Some people refer to them as umbrella trees, and no doubt other descriptive names as well. Charlottetown has some fine old specimens and I remember seeing them somewhere in a rural part of the Island.



Most of the Camperdown Elms on the Island were planted earlier in this century. Unfortunately, they will be the last planted here, for it is now illegal to import them, or any other species of elm for that matter. All elms may transport the deadly Dutch Elm Disease which has effectively devastated native elm trees throughout much of North America, England and Europe. Prince Edward Island is one of the few places

anywhere that still has magnificent specimens of this tree left. Have you ever appreciated the especially fine ones near the corners of Brighton and North River Roads, of Grafton and Rochford Streets, or in the four downtown 'squares' in Charlottetown?

The Camperdown Elm is a cultivated form of the Scotch or Wych Elm, a tree native to Europe and Western Asia. Actually, it is a grafted tree with the gnarled and twisted upper portion artificially grafted on to the rootstock of a normal elm. The apparent purpose of this is to give it a strong support and height, where its unique branching habit can be seen to best advantage. The leaves are especially susceptible to the elm leaf beetle which skeletonizes them, making the tree unsightly until it grows new leaves. Unfortunately, the only way to eliminate this pest is with chemical sprays in the spring as the leaves open.

The National Arboretum in Ottawa believes that their Camperdown Elm is the largest in the country (6m high and 9 m wide in 1980) and one of the most ornamental in their collection¹. Anyone visiting our nation's capital this year may want to check this out. After all, the National Arboretum is one of the best collections of trees and shrubs in Canada, and open to the public. Who knows, maybe we have a Camperdown Elm on P.E.I. that is even larger?

¹Buckley, A.R. 1980. Trees and Shrubs of the National Arboretum. Research Branch, Agriculture Canada, Publication 1697. Ottawa. 237 p.

How's this for taking the bull by the horns? Some New Brunswick members attending the Atlantic Environmental Network meeting are working on a proposal for an Eco-Lotto. It would support conservation groups of all aspects, heritage projects, alternative or right livelihood business, sustainable agriculture, alternative forestry, pollution control and research, scientific enquiries, anti-nuclear lobbyists, natural rights, Gaia projects in film, radio or TV. In short, funding for the transition to a sustainable world.

Atlantic Lotto makes profits of between \$25 and \$45 million and with only a fraction of this funding all existing groups could be adequately supported and could afford to hire first-class support staff, scientific or otherwise. At least we could hope for more money to projects and a lower overhead than Atlantic Lotto.