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## **Erie MetroParks working to revive American Elm**



Cheryl Westcott, Erie MetroParks manager for the James H. McBride Arboretum in Huron, waters a 2-year-old American Elm.

Register photo/  
ABIGAIL BOBROW

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**HURON**

Decades ago, Dutch Elm Disease virtually wiped out American elm trees in much of the U.S.

Erie MetroParks has launched a long-planned counterattack, seeking to reestablish the rare tree in Erie County.

The parks department planted seven American elms at the James H. McBride Arboretum on the north side of the BGSU Firelands campus, off of Rye Beach Road just south of Ohio 2.

Six of the trees — two Princeton American elms, two American Liberty elms and two New Harmony American elms — have been planted on either side of a walkway that runs south of Parker Lake at the arboretum. A seventh Freedom American elm has been planted in a meadow.

The trees, planted only a few weeks ago, are small at about three feet tall, but expected to grow quickly, said Cheryl Westcott, park manager for the arboretum. When they grow, they are expected to provide a shaded walkway along the path and give visitors a chance to see what the majestic, vase-shaped trees look like.

"They should be growing two to three feet a year," Westcott said. "Some say they should grow six feet a year. I'm not expecting that out here."

Westcott said she had been trying to purchase the elms for three to four years.

While there are Chinese elms in Erie County, there are few, if any, other American elms, Westcott said.

Until the arboretum's new trees began to arrive in May, "I had never seen an elm," she said.

The first month after the trees arrived, Westcott watered them every day. She's cut back to every other day.

"The first year, you have to be very particular about making sure it has water," she said.

Dutch elm disease was first found in the U.S. in Ohio around 1930, according to an Internet site maintained by North Dakota State University. The disease is a fungus carried by elm bark beetles, the site says.

There is no guarantee the disease won't attack the young elms at the McBride Arboretum, but the trees were grown from cuttings taken from trees resistant to the disease, Westcott said.

The destruction of American elms in the U.S. is comparable to what's happening to ash trees in Ohio. The emerald ash borer, a beetle, has been destroying ash trees in much of the state, including Erie County.

Erie MetroParks officials have decided there is no way to stop the destructive beetle and are cutting down ash trees in the parks for

lumber.

"Right now, they have no way of eradicating that beetle, the emerald ash borer," Westcott said.

Information on efforts to revive the American elm is available on the Internet at [elmpost.org](http://elmpost.org).

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