

Neighbors work to save elm trees

Community yard sale on May 12 will raise money to inoculate elm trees on Northeast 41st Avenue

By Charity Prater

Electric-green ribbons wrap around the endangered elm trees lining Northeast 41st Avenue between Brazee and Stanton streets. Tied around the trees are signs that read "Endangered Tree." The trees are in danger of contracting Dutch elm disease.

Dutch elm disease is caused by a fungus that passes through the vascular system of the tree. Once the fungus reaches the roots of the tree, the tree becomes contagious. It can infect other trees by natural root grafting. The disease also is spread by the elm bark beetle, which carries the microscopic fungus on its back when traveling from one elm tree to another.

Northeast Portland residents Angela Gusa and Roberta Dyer responded to the epidemic by starting a leg of Save Our Elms, which includes a small group of individuals who want to raise money to inoculate the elms and save the 80- to 90-year-old trees from dying sooner than they have to.

"Twenty years ago," says Dyer, "we had 33 elm trees in our neighborhood. Now we have only nineteen left."

According to Gusa, the elms in the neighborhood were planted in the early 1900s.

"They're supposed to live to be up to 300 years old," Gusa says, "but since 1987 we've lost 42 percent of the elm trees in our neighborhood to Dutch elm disease."

Gusa lost one of her elms last year. The tree had been showing signs of the disease with brown leaves during the summer.

"I could tell that my tree was sick," she says. After the city sent a sample of the tree to Oregon Health & Science University, it was determined that it had Dutch elm disease and needed to be cut down.

"I was so sad to see them cut it down," says Gusa. "That tree had been here for 90 years and is part of the historical aspects of our neighborhood."

Dyer is fortunate to not have lost any of



Angela Gusa (left) and Roberta Dyer are working to save the elm trees in their Grant Park neighborhood. — Photo by Charity Prater

her elms but she still is concerned about the future of the trees in her neighborhood and would like them to live as long as possible.

"People come from all over Portland just to walk down this street to see our trees," she says.

Gusa and Dyer are coordinating efforts to raise funds to inoculate the elms. They will start with the trees on Northeast 41st Avenue, but they eventually hope to inoculate all the elms in the Northeast Portland neighborhood.

will inoculate the elm trees. The event will start early in the morning and continue until sunset. Information about Dutch elm disease will be made available that day. Donations will be accepted during the event as will offers to volunteer.

It costs \$180 to inoculate one elm tree. In addition, as part of the inoculation process, each tree is pruned of deadwood, which costs an additional \$800. The entire process must be repeated every three years.

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Angela Gusa

On May 12, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Save Our Elms is holding a community yard sale on 41st Avenue between Brazee and Stanton streets to raise money for the project. Neighbors who take part in the sale will be asked to donate 20 percent of the proceeds to the inoculation program.

On June 16, Gusa, Dyer and other Save Our Elms members, representatives from Portland’s Friends of Trees and volunteers

\$50,000 so that all the elm trees in the area can be inoculated. Donations to the program are tax deductible.

“This is the beginning of a very long-term project,” says Dyer. “We want to make sure that we can help those who can’t afford to inoculate and prune their own trees.”

For residents unfortunate enough to lose their elm trees, Gusa suggests looking for a disease-resistant elm that can be found at local nurseries.

“We want people to be able to continue walking their dogs and children up and down our street for years to come,” says Gusa, “This is an important aspect of our community that we can’t afford to lose.”

For more information on volunteering or donating to the Grant Park Save Our Elms, call Angela Gusa at (503) 281-2738.