

# Wych elm *Leamhán sléibhe*



Conservation Volunteers  
Northern Ireland

*Ulmus glabra*



## DESCRIPTION

A deciduous tree reaching 35m (105ft), often branching near the base.

The flowers appear before the leaves in late February. Having no petals, they form rounded masses of red stamens. The pale green, winged fruits develop quickly to ripen in early June, each with one seed.

Wych elm prefers rich, deep or heavy soils, which are moist but not waterlogged. It does not thrive in particularly acidic conditions. It is chiefly a woodland tree, but also grows in hedges. Unlike other non-native elms it rarely produces suckers.

It is very hardy, wind resistant and tolerant of smoke.

## PROPAGATION

Collect the seeds from the trees in late May or early June when they begin to turn brown but before they are dispersed by the wind. The seeds can be separated from each other by hand to ensure even sowing.

The seeds are not dormant and should be sown immediately by broadcasting densely on a seedbed or tray. Cover thinly with grit, firm and keep well watered. Germination takes place in 7-14 days and by autumn the young plants should be 20cm tall.

## INTERESTING FACTS

- Elm supports over 100 phytophagous (plant-eating) insects.
- Wych elm is more resistant to Dutch elm disease than other elms.
- Wood of the wych elm is very durable, especially in wet conditions. It was used for water pipes in the past and, when available, is still used in boat building for keels, rudders and the bottoms of canal barges.
- Historically, elms were coppiced and the foliage used for animal fodder.

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