

FFA

BUILDING THE FUTURE

Robesonia FFA Students Continue Successful Nursery

"We've sold out and we're ready to replant," said Steve Miller, agricultural science teacher and FFA adviser at Conrad Weiser High School in Robesonia.

The FFA has been raising disease-resistant American Liberty elms since 1992, has replenished their nursery once, has sold all its trees, and is ready to order another 300. "We plan to keep this going," said Miller.

Actually, they've saved one large elm to plant beside their

new ag building, where they expect to move in the fall of 1999.

The American Liberty elm is a product of university research funded by the nonprofit Elm Research Institute (ERI) of Westmoreland, N.H. The Robesonia FFA is a participant in the Johnny Elmseed Nursery program offered by ERI.

Elm sales have allowed the Conrad Weiser FFA to install a drip irrigation system, order more elms, and fund the FFA treasury. With the next batch of trees, they plan to use proceeds from one-third of the elms to

fund scholarships.

"It surprised me how well everyone takes to the American Liberty elms," Miller said. "We have no lack of volunteers for the elm tree nursery committee."

The committee is divided into groups that take care of fertilizing, watering and pruning the trees, training younger committee members, and taking customer orders. "Every student learns what the trees are and how they came to be," he said.

In a 1995 interview by Elm Research Institute Miller said the project had brought "nursery craft" to the school curriculum,

and that both FFA members and other students were involved.

He described the project as "a combination of an old-fashioned nursery production program woven into what we like to think of as a modern science program."

The chapter sold many of its trees through mention in Elm Research Institute's newsletter, Elm Leaves. Because of the newsletter, we had calls from a radius of 100 miles greater than we would have had otherwise, said Miller.

The FFA chapter plans to send out letters to college and universities in the region when the next batch of nursery elms reach transplanting size. "I think many of them will want two or more for their campuses," said Miller.

He noted that Picatinny Arsenal in Mount Hope, N.J., received a federal award for its planting of 56 Liberty elms purchased from the high school.

In the 1970s, ERI sponsored research to save the American elm, which was threatened with extinction by Dutch elm disease.

By selecting American elm parent trees that proved their ability to fend off the beetle-borne fungus, researchers produced the disease resistant American Liberty elm, introduced for public planting in 1983.

The tree is a purebred American elm, not a hybrid. It retains the American elm's classic vase-like shape and grows well in urban conditions. It is the only disease resistant American elm that comes with a ten year warranty against Dutch elm disease. More than 250,000 American Liberty elms have been planted in more than 750 communities.

The American Liberty elm is distributed only through ERI and volunteer groups such as the Conrad Weiser FFA. If you would like to reserve a Liberty elm or help sponsor additional trees for the FFA nursery project, contact Steve Miller at (610) 693-8537 or visit ERI's site at <http://www.forelms.org>.

Mother's Day Tribute

Surprise your mother, wife or grandmother by sending one of her recipes to be included in a special tribute to mothers in the May 9th issue of Lancaster Farming.

Include a few sentences about her and a picture if you have one. Make sure that you include your name. Your address must also be included if you want the picture returned.

Submissions must be received in our office by May 4 to be included. Send the information to Lancaster Farming's Mother's Day Tribute. Attention Lou Ann Good, P.O. Box 609, Ephrata, PA 17522.

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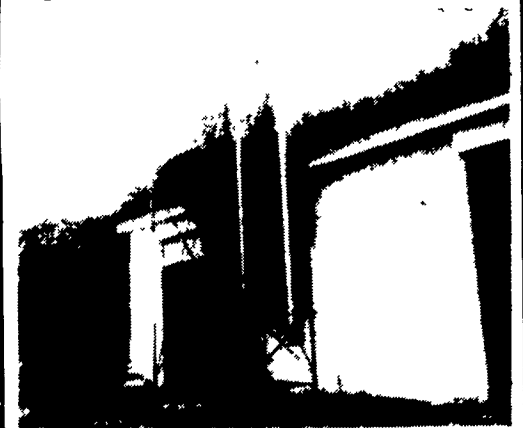
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