Brighton & Hove has a unique National Collection of Elm trees.

Because of its natural environment, shielded by the South Downs and the sea, and because of the effort made to preserve them, Brighton & Hove is home to more than 17,000 Elms – one of the few species of larger trees that can thrive on the area’s chalky, alkaline soil.

This is the largest remaining population in the UK following the ravages of ‘Dutch Elm Disease’. Brighton’s Elms include some of the oldest, rarest and most spectacular varieties in the world.

This illustrated visitors’ guide has been produced by the Friends of the Pavilion Gardens Café (in Royal Pavilion Gardens) where you can see some of the most beautiful and oldest Elms, the University of Brighton, UNESCO’s World Biosphere Region, VisitBrighton, and is sponsored by developer First Base.

Now, please pay your respects to some of Britain’s oldest, most beautiful, natural inhabitants!

**Brighton’s unique Elm trees**

Brighton’s National Collection supports local wildlife and is enjoyed by local people and visitors alike. In the process of photosynthesis, trees improve oxygen levels in the city and it has been proved that Brighton has a high level of animal diversity encouraged by its Elm population. Brighton’s Elms are an incredibly beautiful visual characteristic of the town and its environments.

In 1845, 1000 Elm trees were planted at The Level, as a gift from the Third Earl of Chichester, John Pelham of Stanmer Park.

The Pelhams planted numerous Elms on their estate around Stanmer and Falmer. The drive leading to the village at Stanmer was painted by John Martin, a Pre-Raphaelite-influenced painter. The estate was formerly laid out with many clumps of Elm and woodlands that contained both beech and Elm.

The Royal Pavilion Gardens was not originally planted out with Elms, but many old postcards dating from the late 1800s to early 1900s show a lush canopy of Elms along a drive that led to the Pavilion. The last of these fell in the 1987 storm.

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There weren’t many large trees in the Brighton area historically because of the soil conditions and salty sea winds. There was, however, one very old clump of English Elm in Byways Street in the Lanes, which had been part of a historic farm.

Brighton & Hove like a few other local authorities maintain a control program to ensure Dutch Elm Disease doesn’t get out of hand in the city. This has been in place since 1970 and is a control program to ensure Dutch Elm Disease doesn’t get out of hand in the city.

There are as many as 30 National Registered Champion Elms in the city recorded for the Tree Register. 15 individual trees are the very last examples of their types anywhere in the world.

In Preston Park, Elm was used for hedgerows originally, then as screening for the Manor and the estate. By the mid-18th century it was used for landscaping and reached its peak in popularity, being used to make anything from wheels to coffins, chairs to water pipes.

Brighton’s history is important

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In the Victorian era, the Stanhope family created areas of housing and a ‘plants man’ (house name remains unknown) who often mixed rare Elms of unknown origin among other fashionable trees. The Wheatley Elm (Ulmus minor ‘Sarrigure’) and Huntington Elm (Ulmus hollandica ‘Vegeta’) became popular street trees at this time, many of which survive today.

By 1857 Dutch-borne Hans Heyseck’s contributions were planted in Brighton adding further diversity. They included many unusual numbered clones which were part of his research to find an Dutch Elm Disease resistant species to replace the many tree losses.
Brighton’s Elm Tree Collection

The maps on this page show where you can see some of Brighton’s most spectacular Elm trees. They are only a small part of Brighton’s National Collection.

Royal Pavilion Garden

**Himalayan Elms** (*Ulmus wallichiana*)
These two trees are the last of a batch of Himalayan Elms sent by Professor Hans Heybroek to Alice Holt, and then passed to Brighton Council. They are very rare in the UK. New Gardes had only one example, Brighton has 6! In the Himalayas Mountains they exceed 30m. These two trees were planted around 1970.

**Dutch Elm** (*Ulmus x hollandica 'Major*)
This tree was brought over by nurserymen from Holland in the reign of King William III of Orange. It was very popular with the wife of King George II, Queen Caroline. It was first planted in London in Kensington Gardens. It has unusually cory, winged brown seeds and the bark is orange-brown and formed into small cory date plates. There are more than 700 mature Dutch Elms in Brighton & Hove.

**The Preston Twins: English Elms** (*Ulmus procera*)
These two trees are the Preston Twins. They are more than 400 years old and are the world’s largest English Elms. Only trees in Australia come anywhere near the size of these trees. The Twins are both in fine form, and the one closest to the road can comfortably allow two people to stand inside it.

**Weeping Wych Elm** (*Ulmus glabra ‘Horizontalis’*)
This species was found in Perth, Scotland around 1856. It is called the Table Top Elm as it appears flat from above. It's a grafted tree which means the lower half is often another tree called the stock and above the recognisable line is the scion. This is often done to propagate cultivated varieties (cultivars) of trees such as these. This tree was planted around the time of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee.

**English Elm** (*Ulmus procera*)
The English Elm was brought in by the Romans and used as a means of supporting their grape vines. It was then used for making coffins, small boats, wheels and furniture. Brighton's water mains and sewers used to be made of this Elm. The tree was once a familiar sight in counties like Somerset but Dutch Elm Disease meant all the mature Elms in Somerset, more than a million, were killed. This example has a fine shape and is quite large in appearance.

**Klemmer Elm** (*Ulmus ‘Klemmer’*)
This tree was raised in a nursery in Holland around 1832 and is very rare in the British Isles. In fact the population of only three trees are all in Brighton & Hove. The leaves are wedge-shaped at the base and the tree looks similar to the European Elm (*Ulmus lamsae*).

Queen’s Park

**Golden English Elm** (*Ulmus minor ‘Van Houttei’*)
This unusual golden elm often reverts back to green in a shorter period. It has leaves that are very similar to the inner foliage of the English Elm. The species originates from Holland and can grow quite large in Edinburgh, Scotland. It is quite rare now.

**Clone 28** (*Ulmus minor 28*)
This is one of the Klemmer Elms in Preston Park. This is the largest of one simply labelled number 28. It is a selection from France and was originally grown for Dutch Elm Disease research in Holland. Clone 26 is the largest in the British Isles and can only be found in Brighton & Hove.

**Regal Elm** (*Ulmus ‘Regal’*)
There are four trees all of the same type in this area of Queen’s Park. The Regal Elm has come from the USA. It is fairly resistant to Dutch Elm Disease and grows to form a shape more like a popular tree, tall and column-like in appearance.

**Wych Elm** (*Ulmus glabra*)
This tree species originates from Guernsey in the Channel Islands. This specimen in Preston Park is the largest in the British Isles standing in the World’s most impressive and largest Wych Elms. This example is one of the largest in East Sussex. It’s a native species of tree that grows in woodlands and is still quite frequent in Scotland. The leaves are very rough to the touch and quite large. This tree is a very fine example of this species as well as being over 100 years old.

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Preston Park

**English Elm** (*Ulmus procera*)
This tree is known as the ‘Bruce Tree’ as on one side near the top of the trunk a large iron brace can be seen. It was planted in the 1780s. This tree is older than any in the Royal Pavilion Estate and is featured in Humphry Repton’s landscape application for the Gardens. The tree is completely hollow but it is so healthy as only the outer part of any tree has living tissue.

**Clone 260** (*Ulmus ‘260’*)
This is a clone brought from Holland and was grown in parts of the UK after it was distributed by the Forestry Commission. All the numbered clones that grow in Brighton came from the Alice Holt Research Centre in Surrey and were sent here by Prof. Hans Heybroek for Ray Evison and featured in many paintings by the likes of Rowland Hilder and David Sheppard.

**Wheatley Elm** (*Ulmus minor ‘Sarmentosa’*)
This tree species originates from Guernsey in the Channel Islands. This specimen in Preston Park is the largest in the British Isles standing in the World’s most impressive and oldest line. The leaves are deep green, shiny and smooth.

**Huntingdon Elm** (*Ulmus x hollandica ‘Vegeta’*)
This species originates from an estate near the town of Huntingdon in Cambridgeshire. Big trees can still be seen around the British Isles but to a much lesser extent than before Dutch Elm Disease. This tree is a huge example growing in a well sheltered spot in the park. It is much loved by children and produce very large shiny green smooth leaves.