

Green Ash

Fraxinus pennsylvanica

Common name:

Green Ash, Red Ash, Darlington Ash, River Ash, Swamp Ash, Water Ash, Brown Ash

Pronunciation:

FRAKS-i-nus pen-sil-VAN-i-ka

Family:

Oleaceae

Genus:

Fraxinus

"Fast-growing in its favorite site of stream banks, shallowly but widely rooting, extremely hardy with respect to climatic conditions -- cold or heat, drought or flood -- Green Ash is a ubiquitous sort of tree, which, if it will never win a prize in a beauty contest, is, like its close associates the Box Elder and the Cottonwood, an infinite number of times better than no tree at all, once one gets out in the Great Plains."

(excerpt from Donald Culross Peattie, *A Natural History of Trees of Eastern and Central North America*)

Quick ID Tips:

- Opposite, pinnately compound leaf with 5-9 leaflets (usually 7)
- Paddle-shaped seed pods (samaras) in the spring
- Dark, reddish brown buds form lumpy clusters spaced several inches apart
- Oblong leaf scars have notch at the top (need to view closeup)

Details:

- This broadleaf deciduous tree grows to 50-60 ft tall and develops a spreading habit and irregular crown at maturity.
- The bark is gray-brown with shallow furrows and crisscrossing ridges that forms X-patterns.
- The 10-12" opposite leaves have 5-9 leaflets (usually 7) in a pinnately compound arrangement. Leaflets are each 2-5" long and are ovate to oblong-lanceolate with margins that can be entire (no teeth) or that have a mix of blunt and sharp teeth on the margins (crenate-serrate). The leaflets are dark green and often slightly fuzzy above. (*NOTE: ash along with maples and dogwoods are the most common in our area with opposite leaf arrangements*)
- The fall leaf color is yellow, golden, or bronzy.

- Leaf scars are semicircular, with the upper line nearly straight across but sometimes there is a slight notch in this line. This distinguishes the Green Ash from the White Ash.
- Flowers appear as the leaves unfold, in compact clusters, male (staminate, pollen) flowers green and purple, female (pistilate, seed) flowers greenish.
- Fruit (samara) is 1-2" long and about 1/2" wide, and the wings extends about halfway down the fruit.
- Prefers full sun and moist, deep fertile soils, but is highly adaptable and can grow nearly anywhere.
- Hardy in USDA Zones 2b-9. The native range of the species extends from Nova Scotia to Manitoba, south to Florida and Texas (includes Pennsylvania, hence *pennsylvanica*, meaning from Pennsylvania).
- The Green Ash in our area, along with the White and Black Ash, are under attack from the Emerald Ash Borer (*Agrilus planipennis*), which kills ash trees within 3-5 after initial infestation. For this reason, planting ash trees is highly discouraged. Once infestation occurs, it is very difficult to eradicate this pest which feeds under the bark and bores into wood. Emerald ash borer is native to Asia and was first discovered in the U.S. in 2002. It has now spread to most states in the northeast and upper Midwest and is expected to continue spreading. This borer now constitutes a serious threat to all species of ash in North America.



plant habit - healthy ash (left); infested ash (right)



compound leaf



samara fruit clusters



fall color



leaflets, fall



bark with crisscross X-pattern



bud and leaf scar



winter twigs and buds



bud burst in spring

Sources:

- Oregon State University Landscape Plants, <https://landscapeplants.oregonstate.edu/plants/fraxinus-pennsylvanica>
- David Sibley, *The Sibley Guide to Trees* (Knopf 2009)