

GREEN ASH
Fraxinus pennsylvanica

<u>Location</u>	241 Middle Street, West Newbury	
<u>Physical Characteristics</u>	<u>State Measurement (1/31/2024)</u>	<u>WNTC Measurement (07/2023)</u>
Height (ft.)	74	68
Circumference (in.)	156	160
Spread (ft.)	74	78.5
Points	247.5	247.6

Estimated Age: 198-204 yrs. (1820)

Commentary

Nominator: With so many ash trees in jeopardy, it seemed a good idea to remind the community that they are beautiful trees.

Committee: The Hometh Green Ash is quite significant and remarkable in several respects and is added to the West Newbury Roster of Significant and Remarkable Trees.

First, its size may well qualify it as the state champion Green Ash. The point value for the current state champion Green Ash (based on the 5/5/2023 list) is 229.6. The Hometh Green Ash point value is 247.6 (WNTC measurements) or 247.5 (state measurements), which strongly indicate that it will be designated as a state champion unless a larger Green Ash is measured subsequently.

Second, this tree is located on Middle Street, a historic West Newbury road, and is directly across from a very early farmhouse on the other side of the road. About 50 feet from this Green Ash, there was a large barn foundation that has been dismantled. This suggests that the tree stood in the front yard of the original farmstead and, for reasons unknown, was never cut down like so many other trees during West Newbury's agricultural past. Perhaps its size and prominent location made it remarkable enough to avoid the axe.

Third, the age of this Green Ash is estimated to be 198-204 years old, which means that it began to grow right around the time that West Newbury was chartered as a town (1819). If one chooses, this tree could be regarded as a West Newbury Bicentennial Tree.

Finally, given the Emerald Ash Borer destruction of many, if not most, of the Green Ash trees in West Newbury, this tree is very unusual in that it has survived the infestation thus far and, thankfully, the homeowners have placed great value on keeping the tree healthy. They deserve recognition for their efforts to save what is likely the largest Green Ash in the state and, certainly, in West Newbury.

Other Committee Comments

This Green Ash appears to be the single largest of this tree species in Massachusetts and is therefore a likely candidate for State Champion designation. As noted, the property owners have taken extraordinary care of the tree, including trunk injections against the Emerald Ash Borer, tree pruning as needed, brush clearing around the base, and fertilization treatments to maintain health and vigor of the tree. The tree itself has a very large trunk circumference and stands about 70 feet tall, both of which make this a remarkable specimen in West Newbury.

In addition, the homeowners are correct that we are losing many if not most of our ash trees due to the Emerald Ash Borer infestation. Thus, this specimen should be regarded as potentially unique in our town landscape, especially since it stands alone in an upland field and not close to wet areas. By standing apart from other surrounding trees, this tree also has significant aesthetic appeal.

While the age of this tree is not definitely known, it could date back around 200 years given its location on an old farmstead and would therefore be older than most ash trees in West Newbury. Indeed, the Table of Growth Factors, using the initial circumference measurement, would yield an estimate of 198-204 years. Green Ash has been widely planted as a street tree, an ornamental, and a shelterbelt tree particularly as it does well in lowland soils and can also thrive in moist upland soils (Fergus, *Trees of New England*).

According to Peattie in *The Natural History of Trees*, the Green and Red Ash (same scientific name of *Fraxinus pennsylvanica*) are highly valuable both as a landscape feature but also as a source of highly prized wood. Peattie states that the Ash:

"makes a good show with its handsomely braided ridges on the bole, and ascending branches forming a fine crown, both tall and fairly wide. Under the best conditions, Red [also Green] Ash may grow 60 feet tall, with a trunk over a foot and a half in diameter....

"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.

"The wood of Green Ash is much heavier (44 pounds to the cubic foot, dry weight), than that of Red Ash, and harder and stronger too.... For instance, almost all oars and paddles now are made of Green Ash instead of the costlier White Ash, for Green Ash has the same virtues of toughness, elasticity, straight grain, and great strength."

"Green Ash makes a quick hot fire when used for fuel. Where there is not much Pine, as along the lower Mississippi, it was a favorite for stoking wood-burning engines of all sorts, for it splits easily and has a fuel value of 90 per cent that of White Oak, taken as our standard of one hundred."

Finally, Charles Fergus, in *Trees of New England*, also notes the relatively high density and writes that the Green Ash:

"...is hard, strong, and flexible. Generally, loggers and lumber mills do not distinguish it from white ash, and it has been used for many of the same applications, including tool handles, wagon frames, and canoe paddles."

Photo(s)

West Newbury Roster of Significant and Remarkable Trees



Nominated by:

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Additional information supplied by Fred Chanania, West Newbury

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