



GREEN ASH

Fraxinus pennsylvanica Marsh.

OLIVE FAMILY (OLEACEAE)

Plants: Small to medium-sized, **deciduous trees** 10-15 m tall with irregular, rounded crowns; trunks straight, 30-50 cm wide; branches spreading to ascending; twigs hairless (see notes below); buds reddish-brown, triangular, with 4-6 scales, 3-8 mm long, largest near branch tips; bark greyish brown, sometimes red-tinged, with shallow ridges in an irregular diamond pattern.

Leaves: **Opposite, deciduous**, yellowish green (yellowish brown in autumn), 25-35 cm long, pinnately divided into (5-)7(-9) leaflets, hairless or with a few hairs on the lower side of veins; leaflets 8-15 cm long, tapered to a pointed tip, shallowly toothed towards the tip; stalks narrowly winged, leaving semicircular scars when leaves are shed.

Flowers: Tiny, unisexual, with males and females on separate trees, numerous, purplish to yellowish, in compact clusters along twigs; early spring (before leaves).

Fruits: Slender, winged nutlets (samaras), yellowish green, hanging in elongated clusters; wings extending about half way down the sides of the cylindrical seed case, often notched at tips; autumn, may persist into winter.

Habitat: Moist to wet sites on floodplains and in swamps.

Status: S1

Notes: This species has two widespread varieties. *F. pennsylvanicus* var. *pennsylvanicus*, commonly called red ash, has hairy leaflets, twigs and fruit/flower stalks, and is the most common form in eastern North America. *F. pennsylvanicus* var. *subintegerrima*, commonly called green ash, has hairless leaflets, twigs and fruit/flower stalks, and is the most common form on the North America prairies. • Current status is Global G5; United States N5 (widespread and common) and Canada N5 (Alberta S1, Manitoba S5, New Brunswick S4, Nova Scotia S1, Ontario S5, Prince Edward Island SNR, Quebec S5, Saskatchewan S5). • The hardy, attractive tree is often planted as an ornamental and can spread from gardens and parks to natural habitats. Consequently, it can be difficult to determine if some populations are native or introduced. • Although green ash wood is not as strong as that of some other species, it has been used for making paddles, bats, raskets, snowshoes, tool handles and picture frames. • Green ash seeds provide abundant food for many birds and small mammals.



Photos by Linda Kershaw

