

Ashes - The Important Distinctions

		Black Ash <i>Fraxinus nigra</i>	White Ash <i>Fraxinus americana</i>	Green Ash* <i>Fraxinus pennsylvanica</i>
L E A V E S	Leaflets	7 to 11 in number.	5 to 9, usually 7 in number.	7 to 9 in number.
	Description	Toothed leaflets which are without stalks except the one at the end. Hairs lacking below except for buff colored hairs at the junction of the leaflets and the rachis. Turn yellow in autumn.	Leaflets are mostly entire, borne on stalks, without hairs below. Turn purple in autumn.	Leaflets borne on stalks. Hairy below and on rachis. Turn yellow or bronze in autumn.
B U D S	Size	Less than 1/4 inch.	1/8 inch.	1/8 inch.
	Shape	Sharply pointed.	Blunt pointed.	Cone shaped.
	Color	Black or very dark.	Brown.	Brown with rusty or dull red hairs.

*Specimens of green ash which lack hairs on the twigs or leaflets, but otherwise fit the above description, were formally designated as var. *lanceolata*. They are now designated under the species due to the many gradations of the hairiness character.

Ashes - The Important Distinctions (continued)

		Black Ash <i>Fraxinus nigra</i>	White Ash <i>Fraxinus americana</i>	Green Ash* <i>Fraxinus pennsylvanica</i>
F R U I T	Wings	Flat, completely surrounds seed body.	Wing terminal.	Seed body grading gradually into wing.
	Seed body	Slightly twisted. Is less than half the length of the fruit.	Cigar shaped.	Funnel shaped.
T W I G S	Texture	Smooth, not shiny.	Smooth and shiny, often with slight bloom, very brittle.	Somewhat covered with downy hairs.
	Color	Pale gray, inner bark is dirty white.	Gray or greenish brown, inner bark bright brick red.	Greenish gray, inner bark cinnamon colored.

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BLACK ASH

Fraxinus nigra Marsh.

Black or brown ash occurs is common statewide except in Sagadahoc County. It grows almost entirely on rich, moist ground or in cold, wet swamps and along the banks of streams.

It is a tall, slender tree, with slender branches and a short, narrow head. It grows to a height of 50-60 feet and a diameter of 10-20 inches. The trunk is often without branches for a considerable distance from the ground.

The **bark** is gray to dark gray, corky and spongy, with more or less parallel ridges. It rubs off freely with the hand.

The **leaves** are 12-15 inches long, opposite, and have 7-11 leaflets which are 4-5 inches long, and without stalks except the one at the tip. Leaflets are lance-shape and have remotely-toothed margins. The upper surface is dark green. There are buff-colored hairs at the junction of the leaflets and rachis.



The **fruit** is a single samara occurring in clusters. The seed is flattened and completely surrounded by the wing.

The **twigs** are smooth, gray to olive-green. The **buds** are black or brown and pointed at the tip. The inner layer of the bark is dirty white.

The **wood** is coarse-grained, heavy, tough, durable, and pliable. It is used for interior finishing, cabinet work, barrel hoops, baskets, and, to a limited extent, pulp.

WHITE ASH

Fraxinus americana L.

White ash is one of Maine's valuable timber trees and is found commonly throughout the state. Best growth occurs on rich, rather moist soil of low hills. It grows to a height of 60-70 feet and a diameter of 15-30 inches. The branches are upright or spreading, forming a narrow top in the forest.

The **bark** is broken into broad, parallel ridges by deep furrows and is a dark brown or deep gray in color.

The **leaves** are opposite, and consist of 5-9 leaflets, and are 8-12 inches long. The leaflets are 3-5 inches long, oval to lance-shape, borne on short stalks, edges remotely toothed towards the tip, dark green and often shiny on the upper surface. In the fall they turn to a soft velvety purple color.



The **fruit** is a single samara occurring in clusters. The seed body is cigar-shaped and has a terminal wing.

The **twigs** have a smooth, shiny bark which is grayish, greenish or maroon on the surface. The inner layer of the bark is brick red. The terminal buds are rounded or dome-shaped.

The **wood** is hard, strong, and tough. It is used for agricultural implements, tool handles, oars, furniture, interior finish, dowels, sporting goods and pulp.

GREEN ASH

Fraxinus pennsylvanica Marsh.

Green or red ash occurs statewide except in Piscataquis, Franklin and Hancock Counties. It is not as abundant as the white and black ash, but is fairly common in central Maine. It is sometimes mistaken for black ash. It grows near the banks of streams and lakes on rich, moist soil.

It has stout branches which bend downward on older trees. These form an irregular, compact head in the forest. It seldom exceeds height of 50-60 feet and a diameter of 16-20 inches.

The **bark** on the trunk of old trees is firm and furrowed like that of the white ash. In color, it is dark gray, or brown.

The **twigs** of the season are greenish gray and covered with numerous hairs; sometimes with no hairs. Inner bark is cinnamon red in color.



The **leaves** are 10-12 inches long, opposite, 7-9 leaflets borne per stalk. Leaflets are 4 - 6 inches long, entire or wavy, or sometimes toothed, particularly on the upper-half of the leaflets, yellow-green on the upper surface, hairy below and on the rachis, and oval to elliptical in shape.

The **fruit** has a funnel-shaped seed body gradually blending into the terminal wing.

The **wood** is hard, heavy, fairly strong, coarse grained, and brittle. It is used in the same way as white ash, but the quality is not as good.