

## *Fraxinus americana* (White Ash) Olive Family (Oleaceae)

### Introduction:

White ash is an impressive and popular tree in the urban landscape. The large, airy, two-toned leaves cast a pleasant shade in the summer. Attractive dark buds combined with interesting ash-gray bark that is furrowed into a braided pattern make this tree ornamental in the winter. White ash also has the most striking fall color of all the ash species. It is a common forest tree in Kentucky and is economically important as a timber tree throughout its North American native range.

### Culture:

White ash is a good shade tree for parks and large landscapes. Its shade is light enough to allow grass to grow under it. This species prefers full sun and deep, moist, well-drained soil but it will tolerate a wide range of moderate conditions. It does not tolerate drought when planted in a confined area. White ash should be pruned in fall. A number of potential pest problems are associated with ash but they are generally associated with stressed or newly transplanted trees. The lilac borer is the main pest on white ash. Other potential problems include the banded ash borer, leaf spots, cankers, fall webworm and ash yellows. The emerald ash borer (EAB) has become a serious problem in Kentucky. At this time it is difficult to recommend white ash as a landscape tree unless the homeowner has a plan to treat trees with preventative measures. For more information and current conditions on EAB infestation, see the UK Entomology Department's online resources. Female white ash trees bear an abundance of winged seeds that can become invasive and weedy. Planting male cultivars will eliminate seed production.

### Selected cultivars:

**'Autumn Applause'** - A seedless male with maroon fall color.

**'Autumn Blaze'** - A female tree selected for purple fall color and light fruit set.

**'Autumn Purple'** - This seedless male has deep green leaves that become purple and yellow in fall. Fall color may last two to four weeks.

**'Rosehill'** - A seedless male selected for its dark green foliage that turns bronze-red in the fall. This cultivar is tolerant of lime soil.



### Botanical Characteristics:

**Native habitat:** Nova Scotia to Minnesota, south to Texas and Florida.

**Growth habit:** Upright in its youth, this tree becomes open and rounded with age.

**Tree size:** Reaches a height of 50 to 80 feet with a similar spread at maturity. Can reach 120 feet tall.

**Flower and fruit:** Clusters of small male and female flowers bloom on separate plants before leafout. Fruit is a tan, 1- to 2-inch-long samara.

**Leaf:** White ash has a very large 8- to 15-inch leaf with five to nine leaflets. Dark green leaves become yellow and/or deep purple and maroon in fall.

**Hardiness:** Winter hardy to USDA Zone 4.

## *Fraxinus americana* (White Ash)

### Olive Family (Oleaceae)

#### Page 2

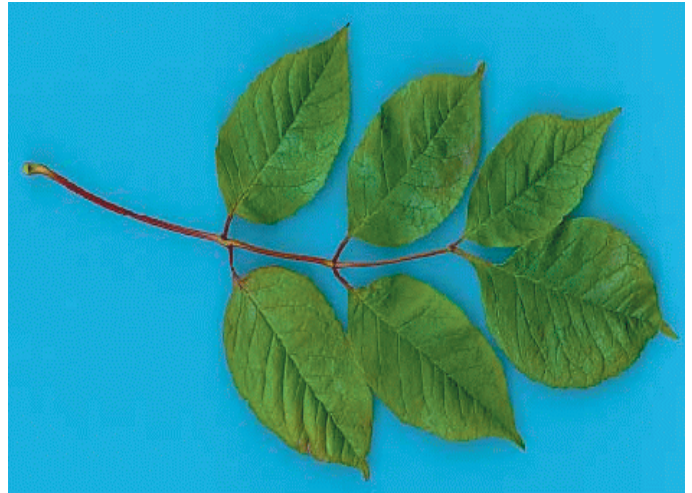
#### **Additional information:**

White ash is abundant and familiar both in the woods and in the urban landscape. It is the most common of all ash species in its native range. The 95-foot national champion is in Palisades, N.Y. Although a tough, urban-tolerant tree, white ash is not as adaptable as green ash. Its ornamental qualities, however, exceed those of green ash, and white ash is much less likely to suffer storm and ice damage.

White ash is a wonderful ornamental tree. The airiness of its dark green foliage contrasted with the white undersides of its leaves creates a nice shade. White ash has the most spectacular fall color of all the ashes. Using cultivated varieties, however, ensures consistent fall color.

White ash seed attracts several bird species, including finches, cardinals, grosbeaks, grouse, turkey and quail.

The white ash genus name, *Fraxinus*, is from the Latin name for the Old World ash species. Ash belongs to the olive family and consequently has some unlikely relatives such as forsythia, privet, fringetree, lilac and olive. *Fraxinus* includes many economically important species because of its beautiful and useful wood. Its prized wood is strong and resilient but light in weight. Because of its tremendous significance as a timber tree, ash has a well-developed Old World history and is incorporated into many ancient mythologies. The tree was thought to have the power to ward off snakes. When colonists arrived in the New World they quickly discovered wood of the New World ash species had the same superior qualities as that of the Old World ash species. Of the North American ash species, white ash is the most valuable. Ash is used to make sports equipment (such as baseball bats and bowling alleys), tool handles and church pews. Its wood is also valued for making veneer and furniture.



White ash has a compound leaf

Ash wood is used to make Louisville Slugger bats

