

Black Ash

Fraxinus nigra

STATUS

Not Listed 

Threatened 

97



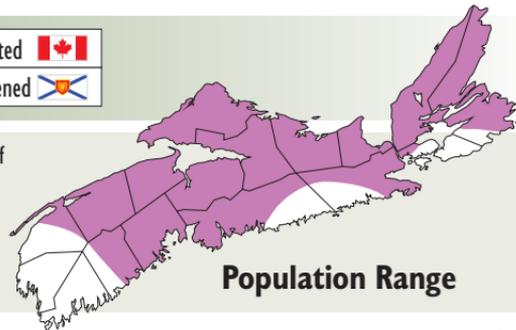
© ALAIN BELLIVEAU (BOTH)

Leaflets without stems (petioles)

Species Description

The Black Ash is a deciduous tree belonging to the olive family that typically reaches heights of 10-16 m and a diameter of 5-30 cm. Leaves (20-45 cm long) composed of 7-11 lance-shaped leaflets (each 7-16 cm long), are paired on the branch (opposite). Leaflets are finely toothed from top to bottom, have no stem (petiole), and have tufts of fine hairs on the mid-rib where they join the central axis of the leaf (rachis). Mature bark is somewhat ridged, corky, and easily indented by a fingernail. Seeds are small (2.4 cm long), flat, and broadly winged for the whole length of the seed.

Distributed across much of temperate northeastern North America; very scattered distribution throughout much of Nova Scotia.



Population Range

Habitat

Black Ash grows in seasonally-flooded, or seepy swampy mixedwood or hardwood forest habitat. It is somewhat intolerant of shade and prefers to grow in soils with some nutrient richness, like those at the base of hardwood slopes, in floodplains, and along streams. It is often found growing with White Ash.



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In places where the soil is wet, look for a small to medium-sized tree with finely toothed leaflets without stems (petioles), and corky bark.

Interesting Points

- One of the last trees to leaf out in the spring, and among the first to drop its leaves in the fall.
- Its wood has a porous quality that makes it very suitable for basket-making; the Mi'kmaq have used Black Ash for basket-making for hundreds of years.
- The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq has been working on Black Ash (or "wisqoq") projects for over 15 years including education, research and outreach.



Apple Basket made by Rita & Abe Smith

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Similar Species

White Ash:

Generally fewer leaflets on well-developed leaves (few leaves have more than 7 leaflets). Leaflets are only coarsely toothed near the tip, have a stem (petiole) and are usually more rounded in shape. Bark firm (not soft-corky) and regularly furrowed. Habitat can be wet or dry.



Firm, regularly furrowed bark

European Black Ash:

Generally near human settlement and not frequent in very wet habitats. Terminal buds very black (vs. dark brown). Leaflets lack hairy tufts at the base of the mid-rib, and 10 cm or less in length (vs. 11+ cm).

Mountain-ash:

More and smaller leaflets (13-17). Bark relatively smooth. With clusters of red berry-like fruits.

Threats to Survival

- The Emerald Ash Borer, an invasive exotic beetle from Asia, has killed 50 million ash trees since 2002 when it was first detected in Michigan. It continues to spread and is moving eastward. It lays its eggs in ash trees and the larva feed on the living part of the tree, usually causing the tree to die within five years.
- Floodplain and rich upland habitat in Nova Scotia has been highly altered for agriculture and settlement, and continues to be lost.
- Illegal harvesting for wood products.

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Emerald Ash Borer

How You Can Help

Learn how to identify Black Ash and report trees. Reduce the likelihood of introducing or spreading invasive alien species by avoiding the long-distance movement of wood that may carry exotic insects or diseases.

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Fine teeth along entire leaf margin

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Contacts, Information & Sighting Reports

Contact: NS DNR (902) 679-6091

Info: www.gov.ns.ca/natr/wildlife/

Sighting Reports: 1-866-727-3447 or www.speciesatrisk.ca/sightings