

Oleaceae

olive family

Shrubs or trees, the 600 species included in the olive family all have opposite leaves. Flowers are regular, although they may be perfect or unisexual. Calyx when present is four-merous. Corolla lobes also number four, although the corolla may be absent or the petals distinct. In sympetalous species the stamens, 2–4, are borne on the tube. The ovary is superior, divided into a pair of locules. Fruits are of several types. A prized oil is produced by the olive (*Olea europaea*). Some of our common ornamental shrubs are included in this family, such as lilac.

Fraxinus L.

ashes

Trees of the northern hemisphere, there are 65 species in total. All bear their flowers in tight racemes or panicles. Generally they are unisexual; the calyx vestigial or absent. Our species have the corolla absent. Stamens number a single pair. Fruit is a samara, with one seed. Ash is one of our few trees bearing compound leaves.

Key to species

- | | |
|---|---------------------------|
| A. Leaves with papillae below. | <i>Fraxinus americana</i> |
| aa Leaves without papillae below. | B |
| B. Leaflets sessile; samara winged to the base; buds blue-black. | C |
| C. Leaf rachis tomentose at the base of the leaflets; brown tomentum below along the midvein. | <i>F. nigra</i> |
| cc. Leaf rachis glabrous or at most puberulent; brown tomentum absent. | <i>F. excelsior</i> |
| bb. Leaflets petiolate; samara not winged to the base; buds brown. | <i>F. pennsylvanica</i> |

***Fraxinus americana* L.**
White Ash; frêne blanc



Photo by Ross Hall



Photo by Ross Hall



Photo by Martin Thomas

The White Ash reaches 40m in height, its trunk clad in deeply furrowed bark, the grooves arranged in a diamond pattern. Leaflets 5–9, glaucous below. Calyx persistent in fruit.

Flowers in late May.

Open forests, often on intervalles or lowlands.

Frequent throughout NS and sometimes common.

Ranges from NS to ON, south to FL and TX.

White Ash was frequently used for small tool handles as in hammers and axes.

Fraxinus excelsior* L.*European Ash; frêne commun**

Photo by Marian Munro

A large tree with a spreading canopy, it was once popular as a shade tree. Its leaves have the rachis mostly smooth and the terminal leaflet is generally less than 10cm long, less than 3cm wide. This contrasts to those of *F. nigra*, which are larger. The leaflets are sessile, lanceolate and serrate. The calyx is absent or soon deciduous.

Once planted and vigorous in growth, escaping to roadsides and sometimes persisting at old home sites.

Scattered throughout the province.

NS to ON, south to KY. Introduced from Eurasia.

Fraxinus nigra* Marsh.*Black Ash; frêne noir; wisqoq**

Photo by Sean Blaney

A small tree bearing yellow bark. Leaflets sessile, 7–11 in number and lanceolate in outline; they are pubescent below at the base of the midrib. Calyx is deciduous in fruit.

Flowers during May and June.

Typical habitat includes poorly drained soils and swampy woods.

Known from Digby to northern Cape Breton, scattered along the northern side, rare elsewhere.

Ranges from NF to MB south to VA and KY.

This tree is of significance to the Mi'kmaq communities, for basket-making.



Photo by Sean Blaney



Photo by Beth Cameron



***Fraxinus pensylvanica* Marsh.**

Green Ash; frêne rouge



Photo by Sean Blaney

Reaching 25m in height, it also bears lanceolate leaflets. It is separated from our other native species by the presence of winged petioles attaching leaflets to the rachis.

Flowers in May.

Grows on poorly drained soils around lakes and ponds in ravines, etc.



Photo by Sean Blaney

Collected from Lunenburg, Kings and Hants counties.

Ranges from NS west to AB and south to UT, TX and FL.



Syringa vulgaris, the **Common Lilac** is sometimes seen, persisting near old homesteads. Its fragrant white to purple flowers are familiar to most, appearing late May and June.