

Black Ash

Fraxinus nigra



Black ash is an adaptable species and hardy wetland tree that is native to Aitkin County. Black ash has compound 3"-5" leaves, with 7-11 leaflets along a central stem. Seeds are 1"-2" elongated ovals clustered together in bunches. Black ash is differentiated from green and white ash by smoother, less-grooved bark and a tendency to be found in wetter, swampy environments. Another way to determine species is by how the leaflets are attached to the main stalk: white ash has a long stalk, green a short stalk, and black has no stalk at all. Black ash wood is easy to spilt and utilized for basket-making, veneers, lumber, and fuelwood.

Height: 35'-75'

Black ash is a slow-growing tree; many 5 ft tall trees are 10-15 years old. In very wet, swampy conditions, many black ash grow no more than 40 feet tall, with a diameter of only a few inches.

Planting environment:

Soil composition: Peat, muck, fine sands and loams. Tolerates acidic conditions.

Soil moisture: Moist to wet soils

Sunlight: Part sun (>4 hours of sunlight per day)

Planting of ash trees is generally not recommended; emerald ash borer, an invasive insect, causes a 99% mortality rate in all three of Aitkin's ash tree species. The emerald ash borer is not yet present in Aitkin County, but has been found in Cloquet in 2022. It may be difficult to find ash seedlings for purchase.

Maintenance:

Black ash trees can be difficult to maintain due to their wet habitats. If attempting to regenerate black ash, consider thinning existing stands of black ash by removing 1/4th of the mature trees – this will increase natural seedling survival.

Protect regeneration and seedlings from deer browse. Once seedlings are several years old, remove any remaining mature trees while the ground is frozen to encourage seedling growth.

Top diseases/pests:

1. Emerald ash borer
2. Deer/rabbit damage
3. Oystershell scale

