

White Ash (*Fraxinus Americana*)

Origin: Native

Status in Park: Widespread small trees. Some standing dead ones remain. Has been decimated by the Emerald Ash Borer (see Notes below).

Characteristics: Up to 100 feet tall, 4 feet in diameter; crown pyramidal or ovoid, with slender branches; bark , In mature trees, grayish in color, with narrow intersecting ridges in diamond patterns, In young trees, gray and smooth; flowers initially minute, without petals, purplish, in crowded clusters, becoming elongated and less crowded; fruits paddle-shaped, winged samaras, up to 2 ½ inches long.

Leaves: Opposite, pinnately compound, with 5-9 similar leaflets (usually 7); 8-16 inches long; with smooth edges or a few small teeth; dark green above, whitish below, smooth, leaflet stalks ¼ to ½ inches long and uniformly thin.



Location of tagged trees:



White-centered symbol indicates leaves are too high to be easily seen.

Notes: White ash wood is tough and shock-resistant and has been highly valued for baseball bats, tool handles, ladders and also furniture.

But in the early 2000's the Emerald Ash Borer, a pest beetle species, was accidentally introduced into the US from China. The beetle has no natural enemies here and quickly spread into our forests. White Ash is especially vulnerable to beetle attack, and the beetles decimated the White Ash in the park. Beetle larvae tunnel through the cambium tissue and eventually kill the tree. The standing dead tree marked in our park shows the numerous larval tunnels under

the bark. Since virtually all of the White Ash trees in the park were gone by 2010 or 2015, the beetles no longer had food, and the population disappeared.



However, the beetles never did attack trees smaller than about 1 inch in diameter and there were also numerous seeds in the soil. Therefore, many small White Ash trees have survived or sprouted at Spring Creek. The species is numerous now, but the trees are not large. It is unknown whether beetle populations will surge and destroy the ash trees again in the future. Scientists in our country have done research to find and release predators and parasites to control the beetles. Hopefully a balance can be achieved to allow White Ash in the forests to thrive again.

The beetles do not attack any kinds of trees except ash. Two additional ash species occur in the park. Green Ash, like White Ash, is readily attacked by the beetles, and most of these beautiful and common large trees were destroyed. Once again, only the small trees are present now. But Blue Ash is different. It is quite resistant to beetle damage. Our tagged example is small, but Blue Ash 2-3 feet in diameter are present in a remote part of the park.