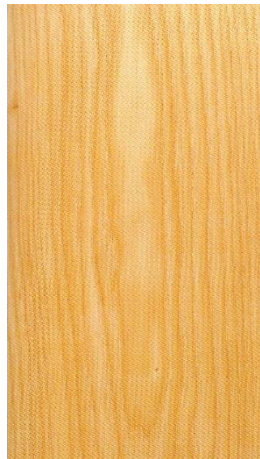


## Wood of The Month



End Grain View

### *Fraxinus Americana* – American white ash

*Fraxinus Americana* or American white ash is the most common ash that we here in the central US are accustomed to finding. However, it is often confused with other ash species such as; blue ash (*F. quadrangulata*), black ash (*F. nigra*), green ash (*F. pennsylvanica*), or pumpkin ash (*F. profunda*) which is found mostly in the southeastern corner of Missouri. Ash is a member of the Olive family (*Oleaceae*).

Ash is pale in color and varies among species as does the hardness. It is an important wood, not so much for its decorative value as for its strength and bending abilities since it has excellent elastic properties and steam bends well. It is an open-grained, ring porous wood with straight grain that is strong, hard and stiff, and has a high resistance to shock. That is why it is used for many tool handles, slack cooperage, furniture, trim, cabinets, boat building and sporting equipment, such as; bats, hockey sticks, and oars. In the case of handles, ash is preferred for lifting tools because of its lighter weight, while hickory is better for striking tools because of its greater strength. One of the interesting facts I found is that one of the earliest reported uses was as a snake bite preventative. Ash leaves in a hunter's pocket or boots were "proved" to be offensive to rattlesnakes and thereby provided protection from them.

Since ash is hard it can present some challenges in working or turning. It can chip and splinter where end grain curves on a turning. The distinctive grain patterns and range of color can make it difficult to hide joints when gluing or laminating. It takes most clear finishes well, but the hard patches do not take stain well. When shaping, make shallow cuts and use very sharp tools. Black, green, pumpkin and blue ashes have lower specific gravities and lower strength properties, but are still moderately strong, hard, and stiff compared to other native hardwoods. They also split easier, and shrink more.

You can find ash on deep, moist soils such as along major streams and is also planted widely along streets and in yards as ornamentals. The ashes are being very threatened and are in great danger of being destroyed much like elm because of Dutch elm disease or the blight that wiped out chestnuts. Their danger comes in the form of the Emerald Ash Borer. You can read about this at; [Emerald Ash Borer](#) which is a link to the Missouri Department of Conservation website. Therefore, if you get your ash wood from a tree that has been felled because of disease or bug damage, you should take precautions to not spread the problem to your own trees or neighborhood.

You can read more on ash at; <http://www.wood-database.com/lumber-identification/hardwoods/white-ash/> or [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fraxinus\\_americana](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fraxinus_americana)

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