

Plant of the Week



Fraxinus pennsylvanica Green Ash or Red Ash

Australians have always sought the best of northern hemisphere deciduous trees for their parks and gardens. **Green Ash, or Red Ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*)** is no exception, particularly for those living in cooler climates, such as the Southern Highlands of NSW, Canberra and the ACT, and much of Victoria. Surprisingly, **Green Ash** trees have been planted in the forecourt of the old Macquarie University Library where they are doing particularly well.

F. pennsylvanica, as you can guess from the name, is a native of central and eastern North America¹. In recent years **Green Ash** have been decimated by the **Emerald Ash Borer**, introduced into North America from Asia. The insect has had a disastrous effect and it is estimated that the damage bill in the US alone is \$US3.5 billion annually². The borer destroys all species within the genus *Fraxinus*², and in the future, Australia and New Zealand may well be repositories of propagation material for the reintroduction of Ash species to North America. Most *Fraxinus* species produce masses of seed which is an important food source for North American wildlife. However, this abundance of seed should remind us to be cautious where we plant *Fraxinus* which is a close relation of both **Privet (*Ligustrum*)** and **Olives (*Olea*)**, both of which are serious pests in many parts of Australia. On a more positive note, the **wood of Green Ash** is widely sought after for the manufacture of **guitars**, including **Gibson, Fender and Ibanez**¹.

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Downing Herbarium, Department of Biological Sciences, 30.04.2012

¹ Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fraxinus_pennsylvanica

² Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emerald_ash_borer

