

Hello Trees Resource Sheet



What to look for outdoors: early spring Ash tree flowers: male and female



Have a magnifying glass in your pocket.



Are you looking at an ash tree?



Is it a male or a female ash tree? Check on Hello Trees '[ash tree identification](#)'.



Ash tree buds in late winter

Through the winter, all ash trees have neat black buds:

- pointed-helmet shaped buds at the end of each twig
- and round ones on either side.

Now those buds are swelling up and changing shape.



Is it the pointed buds or the round buds that are starting to swell first?

On my ash tree, it is the round buds that are swelling first.

? Are they on yours?



Do you think flowers or shoots will come out of the side buds?



Clue: buds at the end of a twig are usually shoot buds.

flowers will come out of the round side buds,
shoots will come out of the pointed buds.



Do you think pollen-bearing flowers will come out of the male or the female buds?



Quite right. Male trees have pollen-bearing flowers.



Get out your magnifying glass and have a look at the round buds.

Can you see a hole appearing in any of the buds?

Can you see tiny purple bobbles inside, some dull and some shiny?



Developing male ash flowers

Here is one of my photos of male ash flowers as they emerge and get covered in pollen.



Are they the same on your male ash tree?

Are some of the bobbles a different colour?



Ash trees are wind pollinated.



Can you think of an advantage to the tree to have flowers coming out before the leaves?



You've got it. The leaves would get in the way of the pollen being carried away by the wind.

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Where does the pollen need to be carried to?



On to the flowers of the female ash tree, of course!

No seeds will form until the pollen has reached the female flowers.



Ash seeds are called **keys**.

? Have you found a female ash tree? Are there any of last year's keys? Or only key claws?

Of the two ash trees I have been looking at, the female's flower buds are slower to open.

? Are the flower buds slower to open on your female ash?



Female ash flower buds opening

On my female ash tree, the bud covers are gradually moving apart and I can see what looks like a little green-and-purple speckled egg - not a bunch of bobbles as in the male bud.



Do you think the male and female flowers will be different?

Why don't you wait to see for yourself?



It is fun to speculate and make a note of what you saw and what you predicted.

We would love you to share your predictions with us.

Go to the Hello Trees [Facebook](#) page and put in a visitor post.



One interesting thing I noticed: one branch of my male ash tree has female flowers. That was unexpected. It does happen, though.

? Did either of your trees show such an interesting characteristic?



You might like to compare your findings to the photographs in the Hello Trees book 'Arthur and Annie Ash'.

For more about trees, fun things to look for and do indoors and outdoors - and about Hello Trees books, see the Hello Trees website at <http://hellotrees.co.uk/>