

# Hello Trees Resource Sheet



## What to look for outdoors in Summer

### Tree identification: Ash trees



Have a magnifying glass in your pocket.



There are 6 clues to tree identification: in Winter we have **buds**, **branching** and **bark** (note the 'b' sound). See [Ash tree identification in Winter](#).

In Spring we have **flowers** and **leaf** shape (note the 'f' sound) See [Ash tree flowers](#).

Now, in Summer, we have 2 easy-to-see clues: **leaf** and **fruit** (note the 'f' sound again).



If we are going to look at their leaf and fruit, it would be good to find an ash tree.



*A female ash tree*

Here is a photograph of an ash tree to help you.



Ash trees are known as 'the woodland Venus'.

Here is a little statue of the goddess Venus. It was found in the ruins of Roman Verulamium not far from where this ash tree grows.



Why do you think an ash tree might be compared to a dancing Venus?



I think it is because the branches have an upward swing and the tree is light and airy.

Have you found an ash tree?

Let's focus on the leaves.



*Ash leaf next to the hand of a 5-year-old child*

I am going to describe ash leaves as:

'Long sinuous leaves swaying in the wind, seemingly weightless.'

What is your description?

Did you perhaps describe the leaf as:

- larger than your whole hand? (And mine!)
- being made up of dark green leaflets?
- having leaflets opposite each other?
- having a leaflet at its tip?
- having leaflets with thin pointed tips

- each leaflet being long, thin egg-shaped: fatter at the base, thinner towards the tip?



I would agree with any – and all – of those descriptions.



What do think of my 'swaying in the wind and seemingly weightless' bit?  
Does that ring true for the leaves on your ash tree?

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Does your ash tree have any fruit? We call them 'ash keys'.



Not all ash trees bear fruit.



Can you remember why?



Yes, there are male ash trees and female ash trees.



*Ash fruits, called ash keys.*

They look alike except that only one will have seeds.



Can you remember which?



Yes, the males make pollen and the females make fruit.

So, if you have time, keep looking until you find an ash tree with fruit.

Then we can look at the fruit as well as the leaves.



'Fruit' is a general term for a seed and its casing, whether it is an achene, berry, capsule, caryopsis, drupe, follicle, hesperidium, legume, nut, pepo, pome or samara!



We call ash seeds 'keys' but the correct botanical term for its form is **samara**.



A **samara** is a winged achene.



Can you see the wings? Can you see the twist in the wing? Can you feel the seed within the wing?



*3 whole ash keys and an ash seed separate from its case.*



An **achene** is an indehiscent fruit in which the seed and the seed wall are separate (not fused together).



Test for yourself: can you prize a seed out of its case – or are case and seed fused?



An **indehiscent** fruit is one where the seed does not naturally burst out of its case: the case has to rot away or be cracked open by a predator.



Bullfinches have specially adapted beaks to break ash key cases but, of course, that is no use to the ash tree because the bird eats the seeds rather than carrying them somewhere where they could grow into a new ash tree.

Perhaps bullfinches drop some of the seeds. I think the seeds are too large for a bullfinch to swallow and poo them out whole. Do you think so too?



Any ideas as to the advantage of the twist in the seed case?



Hold an ash key high above your head and drop it from there. Did it spin?

Spinning seeds take longer to drop and are taken further from the tree where they are more likely to be able to grow into a substantial new tree.



**For perfect photographs of every clue to ash-tree identification**

and easy-to-read text, you want [Hello Trees book Arthur and Annie Ash](#).