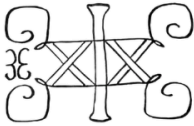
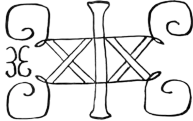


PK-12 Wabanaki Studies Ash Educator Guide



Background:

The ash tree holds deep cultural and practical significance for the Wabanaki, symbolizing their enduring connection to the natural world. Traditionally, ash is harvested and transformed into baskets, showcasing a harmonious relationship with nature.

The emerald ash borer, an invasive pest, threatens the survival of ash trees in the land we now call Maine. These infestations display distinct signs and have sparked critical eradication efforts, including seed collection programs aimed at preserving the species.

Ash is crucial to Wabanaki basket making, as it is used to make many different types of baskets. How are the emerald ash borer and ash preservation impacting basket making now and in the future?

Introduction: This guide explores the sustainable and cultural uses of ash by the Wabanaki, the impact of the emerald ash borer, and the efforts of contemporary Wabanaki artists to preserve traditional basket making.

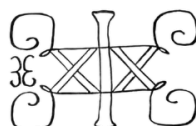
Guiding Questions:

- How can I be an agent of change through preserving Wabanaki culture?
- *What is the historical and current significance of black ash to Wabanaki culture?*
- *How is the Wabanaki connection to ash intertwined with the land now called Maine?*
- *What do archaeologists and tribal preservationists understand about ash use?*
- *Why is preserving the ash tree critical for Wabanaki culture?*
- *What actions can individuals take to support the preservation of ash trees and Wabanaki traditions?*

Preparation:

Before beginning this unit, educators should review background materials on the cultural and ecological importance of black ash (also called brown ash). These links are to support your background as an educator.

- [Ash Protection Collaboration with UMaine](#)



- [Maine Dept of Agriculture: Ash](#)

This guide is designed to help students and teachers deepen their understanding of the important and ongoing cultural significance of ash in Wabanaki culture. Teachers are encouraged to approach the lessons with respect for Indigenous knowledge systems and to establish a classroom culture of curiosity, care, and cultural awareness.

These lessons will expand on the resources and materials found in your Ash Kit.

Each lesson may also be taught K-12. You will be provided with ideas for differentiation across grade levels. You are encouraged to differentiate lessons to fit your students' needs.

Ash Lessons Vocabulary List:

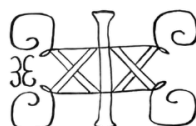
- **utilitarian** - designed to be useful and practical
- **emerald ash borer** - beetle native to north-eastern Asia that feeds on ash trees. Females lay eggs in bark crevices on ash trees, and larvae feed underneath the bark of ash trees. It is an **invasive species** and is highly destructive to **ash trees** native to Europe and North America.
- **invasive** - to spread harmfully
- **eradication** - the complete destruction of something

Essential Questions Covered Within Ash Educator Guide:

1. How is ash harvested?
2. How can the emerald ash borer be eradicated?
3. What is the importance of Wabanaki basket making?

Learning Objectives Covered Within Ash Educator Guide:

- Identification of ash trees.
- Identification of emerald ash borer impact on ash trees.
- Describe the cultural significance of ash for the Wabanaki.



[Lesson One: Ash Tree Identification](#)

Objective: *Students will learn to identify Ash trees and understand their role in the Wabanaki ecosystem.*

The following links are used in Lesson One: Ash Tree Identification and are also linked again within parts of the lesson.

- [Forest Trees of Maine: Handbooks & Guides: Publications](#)
- [Ash Tree Handbook guide](#)

[Lesson Two: Emerald Ash Borer](#)


Objective: *Students will explore the biology of the emerald ash borer and its impact on ash trees.*

The following links are used in Lesson Two: Emerald Ash Borer and are also linked again within parts of the lesson.

- [Emerald Ash Borer - Home and Garden IPM from Cooperative Extension](#)
- [Emerald Ash Borer \(EAB\) Report Form : Forest Health & Monitoring](#)
- [Emerald Ash Borer \(EAB\) : Forest Health & Monitoring : Maine Forest Service : Maine Agriculture, Conservation, Forestry \(DACF\)](#)

[Lesson Three: Basketmaking](#)


Objective: *Students will understand the cultural importance of basketmaking and observe traditional techniques.*


- This video is just over 20 minutes long, but it is great for teacher background
 [Wabanaki Basketmaking Traditions Under Threat? Art, Culture, & the Future ...](#)

[Lesson Four: What's Next? Seeding the future](#)

Objective: *Students will investigate efforts to preserve trees and explore alternative materials for basket making.*

Resources:

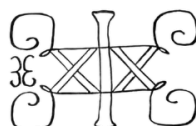
 [Wabanaki Basketmakers](#)

 [Emerald Ash Borer](#)

 [Ash Kit info cards](#)

 [Managing_New_England_Forests_Threatened_By_EAB.pdf](#)


Maine Forest Service Guide: Identifying Ash Trees ([link](#))



University of Maine Extension: emerald ash borer Fact Sheet ([link](#))

Wabanaki Studies Interdisciplinary Kits ([link](#))

 **Wabanaki Spirit and Survival through Basketmaking**

 **Story Baskets of David Moses Bridges**

 **Urchin and urchin basket.png**

 **Understanding Art-Green Urchin basket by Jeremy Frey.pdf**

Additional Links:

[Gauges And Molds - Hudson Museum - University of Maine](#)

[Neuman-Basketry-of-the-Wabanaki-Indians.pdf](#)

Updated: March 2026

