

# Hamamelis virginiana: Witch-Hazel<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

Witch-Hazel grows best in sun or partial shade and in light, moist soil. The plant tolerates some drought and grows slowly. It grows 20 to 30 feet tall and spreads 15 to 25 feet forming a multistemmed, shrubby, round, somewhat asymmetrical ball. Removing the lower branches helps produce a more tree-form multistemmed specimen but regular minor pruning will be required to maintain it in this form since the plant suckers freely from the base of the trunk.

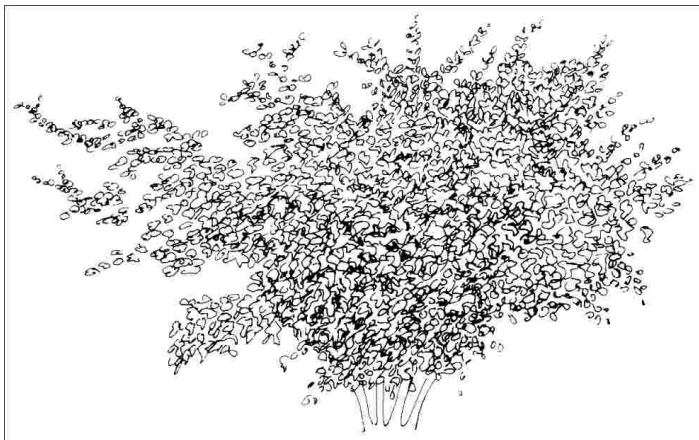


Figure 1. Young *Hamamelis virginiana*: Witch-Hazel

## General Information

**Scientific name:** *Hamamelis virginiana*

**Pronunciation:** ham-uh-MEE-liss ver-jin-ee-AY-nuh

**Common name(s):** Witch-Hazel

**Family:** *Hamamelidaceae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 4A through 8B (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** native to North America

**Invasive potential:** little invasive potential

**Uses:** specimen; container or planter; reclamation; highway median

**Availability:** somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree



Figure 2. Range

## Description

**Height:** 20 to 30 feet

**Spread:** 15 to 25 feet

**Crown uniformity:** irregular

**Crown shape:** round, vase

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**Crown density:** moderate

**Growth rate:** slow

**Texture:** coarse

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** sinuate/undulate, undulate

**Leaf shape:** obovate, elliptic (oval)

**Leaf venation:** pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous

**Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches, 4 to 8 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** yellow

**Fall characteristic:** showy

## Flower

**Flower color:** yellow

**Flower characteristics:** not showy

## Fruit

**Fruit shape:** irregular, round

**Fruit length:** .5 to 1 inch

**Fruit covering:** dry or hard

**Fruit color:** brown

**Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; not showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

## Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** branches droop; not showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns

**Pruning requirement:** needed for strong structure

**Breakage:** resistant

**Current year twig color:** brown, gray

**Current year twig thickness:** thin

**Wood specific gravity:** unknown

## Culture

**Light requirement:** full sun, partial sun or partial shade, shade tolerant

**Soil tolerances:** clay; sand; loam; acidic; slightly alkaline; well-drained

**Drought tolerance:** moderate

**Aerosol salt tolerance:** none

## Other

**Roots:** not a problem

**Winter interest:** yes

**Outstanding tree:** no

**Ozone sensitivity:** unknown

**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** unknown

**Pest resistance:** resistant to pests/diseases

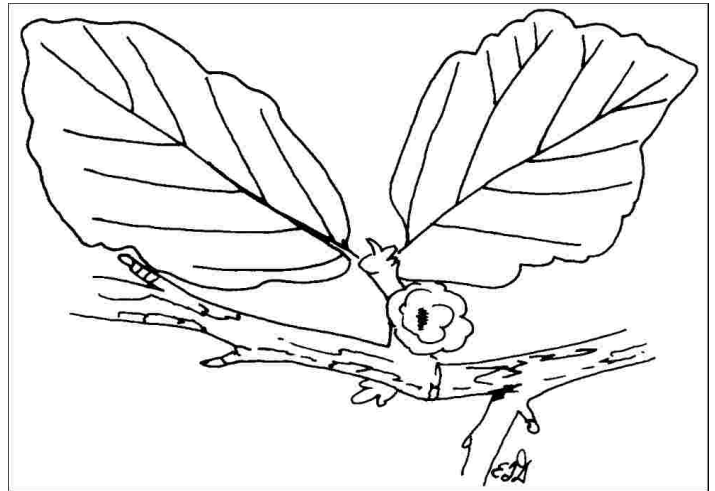


Figure 3. Foliage

## Use and Management

The fragrant flowers are produced in late fall to early winter and have straplike, yellow petals and is the last shrub to flower during the year. The flowers are more interesting than ornamental, however, there are selections with more showy flowers. The fall color is yellow and often is at its peak when the flowers are out.

Plants are found along stream banks in the shade in its native range where they appear open and poorly branched. However, under cultivation in full or partial sun they develop a fuller, rounded crown. Probably not for clay soils. Although galls are frequently found on the leaves, they are usually not serious pests on the plant.

One cultivar is listed: 'Rubescens' - reddish petals.

## Pests

Usually no pests are serious.

Saddled prominent is a green to brown or yellow caterpillar with a reddish brown spot on its back. It eats the leaves.

Witch-Hazel leaf gall aphid causes galls 1/2-inch-long. The galls are green, sometimes with reddish tips, and are formed on the upper leaf surfaces. No real lasting harm will be done by these galls. Natural enemies usually control this insect; hand picking and destroying infested leaves will also be helpful. Horticultural oil applied before the plant grows may help control this insect.

The spiny Witch-Hazel gall aphid causes galls 3/4-inch-long with long, coarse spines. The galls are green tinged with red. Both this aphid and the previous one migrate to birch

for part of their life cycle. Spray with horticultural oil for some control.

Eastern tent caterpillar feeds on Witch-Hazel leaves. Removing the nest by tearing out the web and crushing the contents or pruning out the infested branch will control the infestation.

## **Diseases**

Usually no diseases are serious.

Several genera of fungi are listed as causing leaf spot on Witch-Hazel but they will not require control.

Various genera of powdery mildew cause a white coating on the leaves.