

## Plant Profiles: HORT 2242 Landscape Plants II

**Botanical Name:** *Hamamelis virginiana*

**Common Name:** common witchhazel, common witch-hazel

**Family Name:** Hamamelidaceae - witchhazel family

**General Description:** *Hamamelis virginiana* and *Hamamelis vernalis*, both native to eastern North America, are multi-stemmed large shrubs or small trees valued for their unique flowers and bloom time. The two species are primarily separated by habitat, flowering period, flower color and petal length, and the form or habit of the plant. *Hamamelis virginiana*, the fall-blooming witchhazel, is somewhat tree-form. Native in the Chicago area, it is a common plant of the high dune country, ravines, and rich moist woodlands. *Hamamelis vernalis*, the spring blooming witchhazel, is a shrub. It is native to the Ozarks where it grows in gravelly beds and rocky banks of streams. Cultivar selections of both species are available and are most often selected for improved flower qualities.

**Zone:** 3-8 (9)

**Resources Consulted:**

Bradford, Jack L., and Daniel L. Marsh. "Comparative Studies of the Witch Hazels *Hamamelis virginiana* and *Hamamelis vernalis*." *Arkansas Academy of Science Proceedings*. Vol. XXXI. (1977): 29-30. PDF file.

Dirr, Michael A. *Manual of Woody Landscape Plants: Their Identification, Ornamental Characteristics, Culture, Propagation and Uses*. Champaign: Stipes, 2009. Print.

"The PLANTS Database." *USDA, NRCS*. National Plant Data Team, Greensboro, NC 27401-4901 USA, 2014. Web. 17 Mar. 2014.

Swink, Floyd, and Gerould Wilhelm. *Plants of the Chicago Region*. Indianapolis: Indiana Academy of Science, 1994. Print.

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**Creation Date:** 2014

**Keywords/Tags:** Hamamelidaceae, *Hamamelis virginiana*, common witchhazel, witch-hazel, deciduous, shrub, tree



**Whole plant/Habit:**

- Description: *Hamamelis virginiana* is considered a large shrub or small tree.
- Image Source: Karren Wcisel, TreeTopics.com
- Image Date: October 14, 2008
- Image File Name: common\_witch\_hazel\_1050847c.png



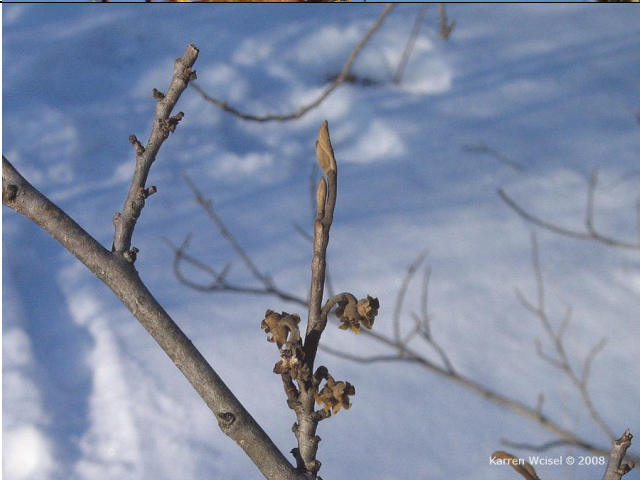
#### Whole plant/Habit:

- Description: It has multiple stems or trunks with an irregular open crown.
- Image Source: Karren Wcisel, TreeTopics.com
- Image Date: January 8, 2009
- Image File Name: common\_witch\_hazel\_0035.png



#### Branch/Twig:

- Description: The pubescent young stems are light brown and have a zig-zag pattern. The larger branches have a smooth gray bark.
- Image Source: Karren Wcisel, TreeTopics.com
- Image Date: November 3, 2009
- Image File Name: common\_witch\_hazel\_1150742.png



#### Bud: Vegetative

- Description: *Hamamelis virginiana* has foliose vegetative buds. They are tomentose (hairy) and look like little tan leaves. *Hamamelis vernalis* vegetative buds are very similar.
- Image Source: Karren Wcisel, TreeTopics.com
- Image Date: January 8, 2009
- Image File Name: common\_witch\_hazel\_0033.png





#### **Bud: Flower**

- Description: The round flower buds are produced on a small stalk in clusters of 3-4 and bend down. The flower buds in this image are just forming; they will turn tan-brown and bend down as they mature. They look very similar to the flower buds of *Hamamelis vernalis*. The green structure with spiny projections in this image is a spiny witchhazel gall caused by an aphid.
- Image Source: Karren Wcisel, TreeTopics.com
- Image Date: July 17, 2009
- Image File Name: common\_witch\_hazel\_3699.png



#### **Flower:**

- Description: *Hamamelis virginiana* blooms later than any other native plant. It generally blooms October through December but on occasion can start to bloom as early as September. The flowers have the ability to roll back up if the weather gets too cold and unfurl again when the weather is more favorable. This protective adaptation is present in both species of *Hamamelis*.
- Image Source: Karren Wcisel, TreeTopics.com
- Image Date: September 5, 2009
- Image File Name: common\_witch\_hazel\_4908.png



#### **Flower:**

- Description: The fragrant flowers of *Hamamelis virginiana* are lemon yellow with four narrow, crinkled, strap-like petals.
- Image Source: Karren Wcisel, TreeTopics.com
- Image Date: October 27, 2012
- Image File Name: common\_witch\_hazel\_7432c.png



#### Flower:

- Description: They frequently flower as the leaves turn yellow fall color which obscures the flowers from view. However, the fragrance of the flowers still permeates the autumn air and reminds you of their presence!
- Image Source: Karren Wcisel, TreeTopics.com
- Image Date: October 18, 2009
- Image File Name: common\_witch\_hazel\_5682.png



#### Flower:

- Description: The petals of *Hamamelis virginiana* are two to three times longer than *Hamamelis vernalis* and are more lemon yellow with very little, if any, infusion of red in the sepals or petals. The shorter petals of *Hamamelis vernalis* will vary from yellow to orange to red. While both species are fragrant, *Hamamelis vernalis* is considered to be more intensely fragrant.
- Image Source: Karren Wcisel, TreeTopics.com
- Image Date: 2012
- Image File Name: common\_witch\_hazel\_7432s.png



#### Fruit:

- Description: The fruit of *Hamamelis virginiana* is a capsule which starts out green and takes a year to mature.
- Image Source: Karren Wcisel, TreeTopics.com
- Image Date: September 27, 2009
- Image File Name: common\_witch\_hazel\_5281.png





**Fruit:**

- Description: The capsule matures in the fall of the following year and splits open expelling its two dark seeds. Exploding out of the capsule, the seeds may go as far as 30 feet!
- Image Source: Karren Wcisel, TreeTopics.com
- Image Date: October 18, 2009
- Image File Name: common\_witch\_hazel\_5785.png



**Fruit:**

- Description: The open capsules may remain on the plant for an extended period of time.
- Image Source: Karren Wcisel, TreeTopics.com
- Image Date: January 5, 2009
- Image File Name: common\_witch\_hazel\_1883.png



**Leaf:**

- Description: The leaves of *Hamamelis virginiana* are alternate, simple, and dark green during the growing season. They differ from *Hamamelis vernalis* in that they are thinner, subcordate to oblique at the base and have 5-7 veins. Differentiating between the two species by leaf can be challenging as the differences are subtle.
- Image Source: Karren Wcisel, TreeTopics.com
- Image Date: September 26, 2008
- Image File Name: common\_witch\_hazel\_4146.png



#### Leaf:

- Description: Fall color of *Hamamelis virginiana* is a beautiful clear yellow.
- Image Source: Karren Wcisel, TreeTopics.com
- Image Date: October 18, 2009
- Image File Name: common\_witch\_hazel\_5690.png



#### Winter interest:

- Description: Notice the calyx remaining on the stem long after flowering. The inner surface of the calyx is usually yellow (rarely with a hint of reddish brown color). However, this feature cannot reliably be used for identification, since, once *Hamamelis vernalis* begins flowering, it could also have sepal remnants.
- Image Source: Karren Wcisel, TreeTopics.com
- Image Date: January 5, 2009
- Image File Name: common\_witch\_hazel\_1886.png



#### Special ID feature(s):

- Description: The fall bloom time and more tree-form habit will be the best identification features for *Hamamelis virginiana*.
- Image Source: Karren Wcisel, TreeTopics.com
- Image Date: October 18, 2009
- Image File Name: common\_witch\_hazel\_5682.png