**Hamamelis virginiana**  
Witch-Hazel¹

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**INTRODUCTION**

Witch-Hazel grows best in sun or partial shade and in light, moist soil (Fig. 1). 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.

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

Scientific name: *Hamamelis virginiana*  
Pronunciation: ham-uh-MEE-liss ver-jin-ee-AY-nuh  
Common name(s): Witch-Hazel  
Family: Hamamelidaceae  
USDA hardness zones: 4 through 8 (Fig. 2)  
Origin: native to North America  
Uses: container or above-ground planter; recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; reclamation plant; specimen; no proven urban tolerance  
Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

**DESCRIPTION**

Height: 20 to 30 feet  
Spread: 15 to 25 feet  
Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette  
Crown shape: round; vase shape  
Crown density: moderate

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1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-294, a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: November 1993.

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Hamamelis virginiana -- Witch-Hazel

Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Flower

**Flower color:** yellow
**Flower characteristics:** fall flowering; pleasant fragrance; inconspicuous and not showy; winter flowering

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; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem; persistent on the tree

Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** bark is thin and easily damaged from mechanical impact; droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; not particularly showy; no thorns

Pruning requirement: requires pruning to develop strong structure
**Breakage:** resistant
**Current year twig color:** brown; gray
**Current year twig thickness:** thin

Culture

**Light requirement:** tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in the shade; tree grows in full sun
**Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; slightly alkaline; acidic; well-drained
**Drought tolerance:** moderate
**Aerosol salt tolerance:** none

Other

**Roots:** surface roots are usually not a problem
**Winter interest:** tree has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers
**Outstanding tree:** not particularly outstanding
**Invasive potential:** little, if any, potential at this time
**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests
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 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.