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Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ PROGRAM

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Hamamelis mollis: Chinese Witch-Hazel[1]

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson[2]

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Introduction

Chinese Witch-hazel is a small, slow-growing, deciduous tree capable of reaching 20 feet high and wide but is more often seen at 10 to 15 feet. The three to six-inch-long, dull, gray/green leaves will usually put on a showy display in fall, as the dying leaves change to shades of yellow and orange before dropping. The long-lasting, showy, yellow flowers appear in early spring and are quite fragrant. However, they may occasionally be injured by cold temperatures (-10 degrees F.). These blooms are followed by the production of inconspicuous, green (turning black) fruits which persist on the tree.



Figure 1. Young *Hamamelis mollis*: Chinese Witch-Hazel
Credit: Ed Gilman

General Information

Scientific name: *Hamamelis mollis*

Pronunciation: ham-uh-MEE-liss MAW-liss

Common name(s): Chinese Witch-Hazel

Family: *Hamamelidaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 6A through 8A (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Invasive potential: little invasive potential

Uses: specimen; highway median; container or planter

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

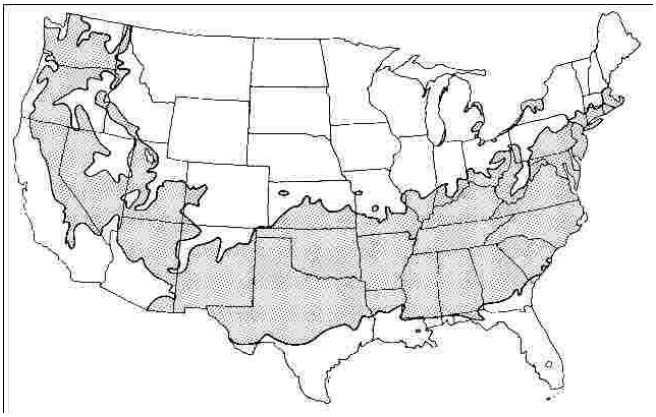

Figure 2. Range

Description

Height: 10 to 20 feet

Spread: 12 to 18 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular

Crown shape: upright/erect, spreading

Crown density: open

Growth rate: slow

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: sinuate/undulate, undulate

Leaf shape: obovate, orbiculate

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

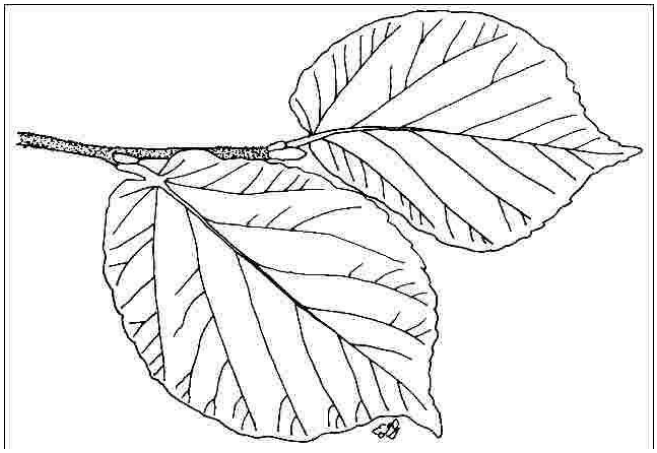

Figure 3. Foliage

Flower

Flower color: yellow

Flower characteristics: showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: irregular, round

Fruit length: .5 to 1 inch

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit color: black

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: 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; well-drained

Drought tolerance: moderate

Aerosol salt tolerance: unknown

Other

Roots: not a problem

Winter interest: yes

Outstanding tree: yes

Ozone sensitivity: unknown

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: unknown

Pest resistance: free of serious pests and diseases

Use and Management

Plant Chinese Witch-Hazel near a deck or patio or in the lawn or low ground cover as a specimen. Space branches apart on a single trunk so they can properly develop their horizontal, layered habit. The lowest branch can be located one or two feet from the ground to form a thick canopy all the way to the ground, or if planted close to a walk or patio, five to seven feet up to allow for pedestrian clearance beneath the crown. Trees can also be purchased and trained with multiple trunks for planting in open areas as specimens. This is an attractive, versatile small tree which could be used more in the urban landscape due to the small size and ornamental habit.

Chinese Witch-Hazel should be grown in full sun or partial shade on well-drained, moist, acid soils. Trees grown in the partial shade are very nice, developing an open crown, but do not become leggy and unkempt like some other trees in partial shade. Nice specimens can be found in clay soils, even those which dry out for a period of time in the summer.

Propagation is by seed or cuttings.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases appear to be serious, although the plant has not been widely planted or tested.

[1] This document is ENH452, one of a series of the UF/IFAS Department of Environmental Horticulture. Original publication date November 1993. Revised December 2006. Reviewed February 2014. Visit the Ask IFAS website at https://ask.ifas.ufl.edu for the currently supported version of this publication. © UF/IFAS. This publication is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 *To learn more about creating and maintaining attractive landscapes that protect Florida's water and natural resources, visit ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/*.

[2] Edward F. Gilman, professor emeritus, UF/IFAS Department of Environmental Horticulture; Dennis G. Watson, former associate professor, UF/IFAS Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering, Gainesville, FL 32611.

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