

Hamamelis virginiana: Witch-Hazel¹

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson²

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.

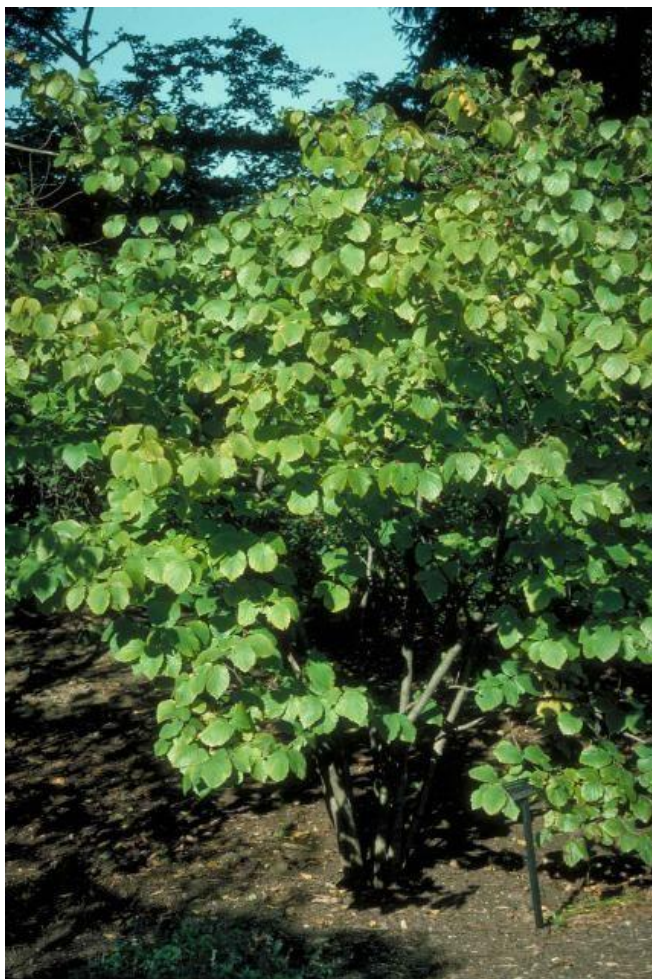


Figure 1 . Young *Hamamelis virginiana*: Witch-Hazel
Credit: Ed Gilman, UF/IFAS

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

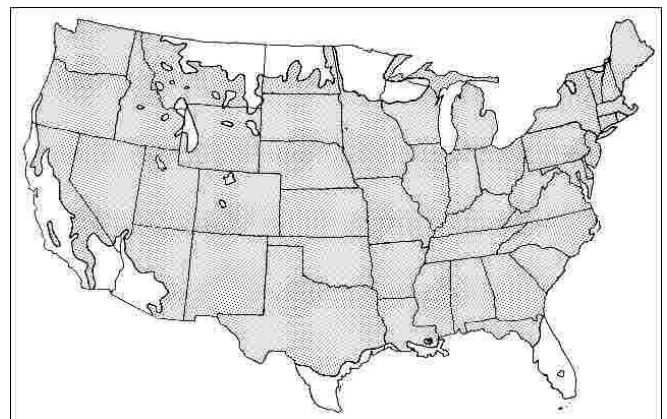


Figure 2. Range

Description

Height: 20 to 30 feet

Spread: 15 to 25 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular

Crown shape: round, vase

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

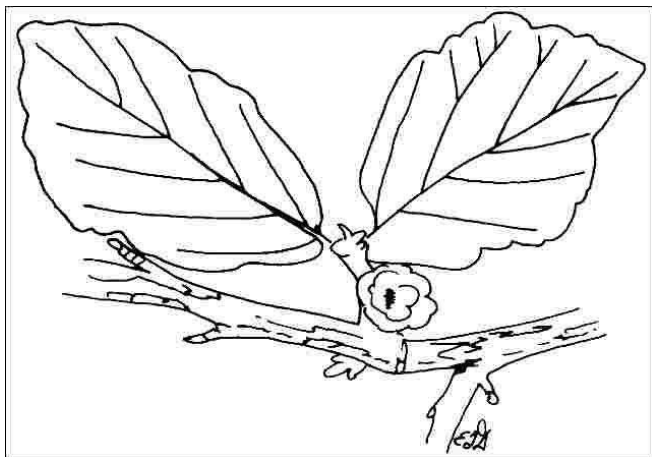


Figure 3. Foliage

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

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.

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

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