

Common name: **American Witchhazel** Genus Species: ***Hamamelis virginiana***



Description: American witchhazel is a deciduous shrub to small tree growing 3 to 40 feet tall. The pale to deep yellow or reddish flowers have both male and female parts and are grouped into loose, showy clusters with a delicate fragrance.

Habitats: American witchhazel is shade tolerant. In the northern extent of its distribution, it is found on drier, warmer slopes and hilltops; in its southern and western distribution, it is confined to moist, cool locations.

Phenology highlight: Its fragrant, yellow flowers with crumpled petals appear in the fall and persist after leaf drop.

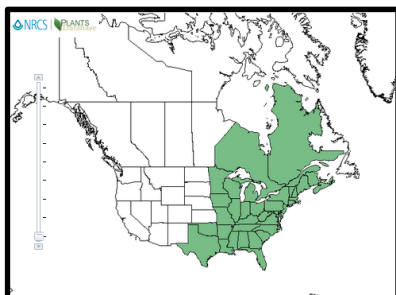
Photo credit: James H. Miller & Ted Bodner, Southern Weed Science Society, Bugwood.org

Species facts

- American witchhazel is moth-pollinated.
- It is an important food source for several bird and other wildlife species.
- Native Americans and Europeans used witchhazel medicinally.
- Its branches have also been made into divining rods used to search for underground water.
- Witchhazel is currently used commercially in cosmetics, lotions, mouth washes, ointments, and soaps.



Photo credit: T. Davis Sydnor, OSU, Bugwood.org



Why observe this species? American witchhazel is a USA-NPN regional species. Regional species are ecologically or economically important. The NPN integrates these observations to better understand plant responses within different geographic regions. In addition, this species is an allergen, and phenology observations provide valuable data to benefit people with allergies and the public health community.

Tip for observing this species: For all leaf phenophases, ignore the very small leaves at branch tips that remain undeveloped throughout the winter, and only consider other leaves on the stems.

Map credit: USDA, NRCS. 2014. The PLANTS Database <http://plants.usda.gov>, 23 August 2014). National Plant Data Team, Greensboro, NC 27401-4901 USA

For more information about phenology and the New York Phenology Project (NYPP), please visit the NYPP website (www.nyphenology.org) and the USA-NPN website (www.usanpn.org)



American Witchhazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*)

Note: leaf, flower and fruit phenophases are nested so you may need to record more than one phenophase for each; for example, if you record **Y** for "open flowers" you should also record **Y** for "flowers or flower buds."



Ellen G. Denny
usanpn.org

Breaking leaf buds One or more breaking leaf buds are visible. A leaf bud is "breaking" once a green or brownish leaf tip is visible. Ignore the very small leaves at branch tips that remain undeveloped throughout the winter.



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Leaves One or more live unfolded leaves are visible. A leaf is "unfolded" once its entire length has emerged and the leaf stalk (petiole) is visible at its point of attachment to the stem. Do not include fully dried or dead leaves.



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Increasing leaf size A majority of leaves have not yet reached full size and are still growing larger. Do not include new leaves that continue to emerge at the ends of elongating stems throughout the growing season.



Celia Cuomo
nyphenology.org

Colored leaves One or more leaves (including any that have recently fallen from the plant) have turned to their late-season colors. Do not include fully dried or dead leaves that remain on the plant.



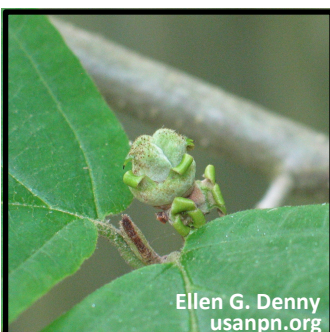
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Flowers or flower buds One or more fresh open or unopened flowers or flower buds are visible on the plant. Include flower buds that are still developing, but do not include wilted or dried flowers.



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Open flowers One or more open fresh flowers are visible. Flowers are "open" when the reproductive parts (male stamens or female pistils) are visible within open flower parts. Do not include wilted or dried flowers.



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Fruits One or more fruits are visible. A witchhazel fruit is a fuzzy capsule that changes from green to brown and splits open, sometimes explosively, to expose the seeds. Do not include empty capsules.



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Ripe fruits One or more ripe fruits are visible. Witchhazel fruit is considered ripe when it has turned brown and has split open to expose the seeds. Do not include empty capsules.

Phenophases not pictured: Falling leaves; Recent fruit or seed drop