

WITCH HAZEL

Hamamelis virginiana

AKA winter bloom, striped alder, spotted alder, hazelnut, snapping hazel, pistachio, tobacco wood



Description: A deciduous shrub or small tree with a short trunk, bearing numerous spreading, crooked branches. The unusual spider-like fragrant yellow flowers appear at an unusual time - in late fall as the leaves are falling- between October to December.

Natural Habitat: Along streams and water edges

Size: 20 - 30'

Growth Rate: Moderate

Light: Sun

Planting and Care: Prefers a neutral to slightly acid soil pH. Dislikes having its roots disturbed.

Ornamental Value: Because witch hazel is one of the last shrubs to bloom, its flower is the only one with color.

Landscape Usage: Good when planted in areas for naturalization, or as a shrub border and forest edge planting. It is not salt tolerant.

Commercial/Traditional Uses: The bark is a traditional herb of the North American Indians who used it to heal wounds, treat tumors, eye problems etc. It is an important ingredient of proprietary eye drops, skin creams, ointments and skin tonics. It is widely used as an external application to bruises, sore muscles, varicose veins, inflammations etc.

Wildlife Benefits: Seeds are eaten by wild turkey, northern bobwhite and gray squirrels. It is pollinated by nocturnal winter moths.

WARNING!

If you bring flowering witch hazel branches indoors, be careful to remove the seed capsules from the previous year. Otherwise, the warm indoor air will cause them to split open with alarming popping noises and spew seeds out across the room.

