



## Phenophase Photo Guide

### *Hamamelis virginiana* (American witch-hazel)

#### Why Observe?

American witch-hazel is a small, spreading tree of the subcanopy. Its crinkly yellow flowers bloom in the fall. The fruits release the small, black seeds explosively, sometimes hurling them 10m (33 feet) away from the parent tree. Witch-hazel is commonly known for its use as an astringent and toner. Extracts from the leaves, bark, and twigs provide an aromatic salve used to soothe cuts and burns. It's also commonly used in preparations to treat hemorrhoids, irritations, minor pain, and itching.

The tree feeds many insect species, making it important to monitor and protect.

#### Tips for Identification

The plant is a woody plant with several stems growing from the base. American witchhazel is a deciduous shrub or small tree with a short trunk bearing numerous spreading, crooked branches. At maturity, it is commonly 4.5 to 7.5 m (15 to 25 feet) tall. It has thin bark and shallow roots. The fruit is a woody capsule containing two to four seeds.

Habitat: Floodplain (river or stream floodplains), forests, swamps, talus and rocky slopes.

#### Special Consideration:

If drought seems to be the cause of leaf color or fall for a plant, please make a comment to that effect.



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Information presented in this guide was compiled from the [USA-NPN](#), [Native Plant Trust's GoBotany](#), and the [FEIS Database](#).



### Breaking leaf buds

One or more breaking leaf buds are visible on the plant. For *Hamamelis virginiana*, the naked leaf bud is considered "breaking" once the bright green leaf surface is visible between unfolding halves of the tiny, brownish leaf blade, but before the leaf blade has unfolded enough to appear like a small version of the adult leaf.



### Leaves

One or more live, unfolded leaves are visible on the plant. Do not include fully dried or dead leaves. For *Hamamelis virginiana*, a leaf is considered "unfolded" when the leaf blade has unfolded enough to appear more or less like a small version of the adult leaf.



### Increasing leaf size

A majority of leaves on the plant have not yet reached their 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.



### Colored leaves

One or more leaves show some of their typical late-season color, or yellow or brown due to drought or other stresses. Do not include small spots of color due to minor leaf damage, or dieback on branches that have broken. Do not include fully dried or dead leaves that remain on the plant.



### Flowers or flower buds

One or more fresh open or unopened flowers or flower buds are visible on the plant. Include flower buds or inflorescences that are swelling or expanding, but do not include those that are tightly closed and not actively growing (dormant). Also do not include wilted or dried flowers.



### Open flowers

One or more open, fresh flowers are visible on the plant. Flowers are considered "open" when the reproductive parts (male stamens or female pistils) are visible between or within unfolded or open flower parts (petals, floral tubes or sepals). Do not include wilted or dried flowers.



### Fruits

One or more fruits are visible on the plant. For *Hamamelis virginiana*, the 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 that have already dropped all of their seeds.



### Ripe fruits

One or more ripe fruits are visible on the plant. For *Hamamelis virginiana*, a fruit is considered ripe when it has turned brown and has split open to expose the seeds. Do not include empty capsules that have already dropped all of their seeds.

**Phenophases not pictured:** Falling leaves, Recent fruit or seed drop \*If you are uncertain whether or not a phenophase is occurring, report a "?" for its status until it becomes clear what you are observing after subsequent visits.\*