

# WITCH-HAZEL

## *Hamamelis virginiana* L.

OTHER COMMON NAMES: Southern witch-hazel.

FORM: Slightly aromatic shrub or small tree with a broad, open crown of spreading branches reaching heights of 20-30 feet and diameters of 4-8".

LEAVES: Alternate, simple, deciduous, broadly elliptical; 4-6" long, 2-3" wide; apex, pointed or rounded; base, blunt to notched and unequal; broadest and wavy-lobed beyond the middle; with 5-7 straight veins on each side; dull, dark green and glabrous above, paler below with hair on the mid-rib and principle veins.

BARK: Thin, light brown, relatively smooth or scaly, the inner bark purplish.

TWIGS: Slender; more or less zigzag; orange-brown to reddish brown or tawny; usually with numerous inconspicuous lenticels.

WINTER BUDS: Terminal buds stalked, naked, hairy, tawny, about 1/2" long; lateral buds, similar but smaller.

FLOWERS: Perfect, opening from September to December; usually in 3-flowered terminal clusters; each flower with 4 bright yellow, twisted, thread-like petals.

FRUIT: A 2-beaked, woody capsule; at maturity, splitting open along 2 lines of suture and forcibly ejecting the black seeds.

Found on the banks of streams, ponds, swamps and on moist, forest soils where it occurs as an understory species in mixed upland hardwood stands.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS: Most noticeable in the summer because of its low, spreading habit; in the late fall and early winter most interesting because of its bright yellow flowers.

WOOD: No recorded data found because not commercially valuable.

USES: Limited landscape use. Historical: inner bark used to produce healing salves, most famous as water-witching sticks.

DISTRIBUTION IN ALABAMA: Reported to occur statewide.

### EXPLANATION OF PLATE

- |                                 |                              |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. A flowering/fruited branch   | 10. Cross section of fruit   |
| 2. Diagram of a flower          | 11. A seed                   |
| 3. Vertical section of a flower | 12. Vertical section of seed |
| 4. A pistil, enlarged           | 13. An embryo                |
| 5. A stamen, front view         | 14. A leafy branch           |
| 6. A stamen, rear view          | 15. Leaf base with stipules  |
| 7. A rudimentary stamen         | 16. Flowers in the winter    |
| 8. An ovule, much magnified     | 17. A cluster of flower buds |
| 9. An open fruit                |                              |



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