



Cooperative Extension Publications

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Native Trees and Shrubs for Maine Landscapes

Common Witchhazel

(Hamamelis virginiana)

Developed by Marjorie Peronto, associate Extension professor, University of Maine Cooperative Extension; and Reeser C. Manley, assistant professor of horticulture, University of Maine.

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Go native!

This series of publications is the result of a five-year research project that evaluated the adaptability of a variety of native trees and shrubs to the stresses of urban and residential landscapes in Maine. Non-native invasive plants pose a serious threat to Maine's biodiversity. Plants such as Japanese barberry, shrubby honeysuckle, and Asiatic bittersweet, originally introduced for their ornamental features, have escaped from our landscapes, colonizing natural areas and displacing native plants and animals. By landscaping with native plants, we can create vegetation corridors that link fragmented wild areas, providing food and shelter for the native wildlife that is an integral part of our ecosystem. Your landscape choices can have an impact on the environment that goes far beyond your property lines.

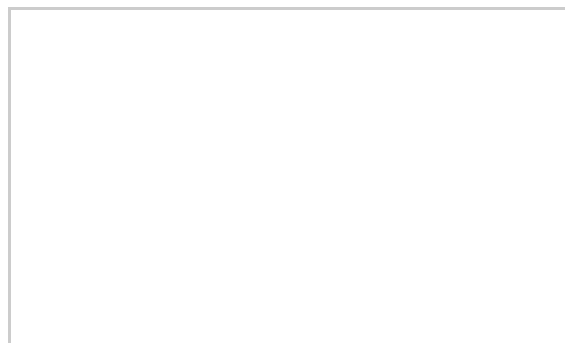
Description

Form: a small tree or large shrub with an open crown of large, crooked, spreading branches

Size: 15 to 20 feet high and wide

Ornamental characteristics:

- clusters of tiny, bright yellow flowers bloom with the golden fall foliage



- picturesque winter branching structure



Photo by Reeser C. Manley

Landscape Use

In Maine, common witchhazel is often found growing beneath the shade of beech and birch trees, keeping company with beaked filbert (*Corylus cornuta*) and an occasional native honeysuckle (*Lonicera canadensis*), and surrounded by colonies of maple-leaf viburnum (*Viburnum acerifolium*). It frequents the drier sites, being intolerant of flooding.

Use it along the edge of the dry woods or at the back of the garden border, placed where the October flowers, yellow with long, spidery petals, will invite you to linger in the garden at a time of year when few other flowers beckon. Or plant a colony of witchhazel in the open woodland, where its golden autumn leaves blend with the similarly colored leaves of the filbert, all catching and holding the morning light.



Photo by Reeser C. Manley

Culture

Hardiness: USDA zone 5a

Soil requirements: prefers moist to well-drained, slightly acid soils

Light requirements: full sun to shade

Stress tolerances:

soil compaction—intolerant

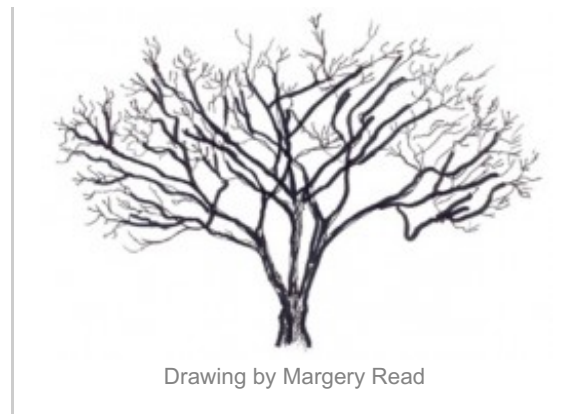
pollution—unknown

deicing salts—intolerant

urban heat islands—intolerant

drought—intolerant
seasonal flooding—intolerant

Insect and disease problems: resistant



Wildlife Value

Only a few birds and mammals devour the seeds of witchhazel, with ruffed grouse and fox squirrels being the most frequent ones. White-tailed deer will browse the twigs and foliage.

Maintenance

Irrigation: During the establishment period, defined as one year after planting for each inch of trunk diameter at planting time, water your trees regularly during the growing season. Give the root zone of each tree 1 inch of water per week; in general, a tree's root zone extends twice as wide as its canopy. After the establishment period, provide supplemental irrigation during periods of severe drought.

Fertilization: Landscape trees and shrubs should not be fertilized unless a soil test indicates a need. Correct soil pH, if necessary, by amending the backfill soil. No nitrogen fertilizer should be added at planting or during the first growing season.

To learn more about native woody plants

Visit the Eastern Maine Native Plant Arboretum at University of Maine Cooperative Extension's Penobscot County office, 307 Maine Avenue in Bangor. Established in 2004, the arboretum displays 24 different native tree and shrub species that can be used in managed landscapes.

Reviewed by Cathy Neal, Extension professor, University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension.

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Illustration by Margery Read, Extension master gardener.

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