



Hamamelis mollis Chinese Witch-Hazel¹

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INTRODUCTION

Chinese Witch-hazel is a small, slow-growing, deciduous tree capable of reaching 20 feet high and wide but is more often seen at 10 to 15 feet (Fig. 1). The three to six-inch-long, dull, gray/green leaves will usually put on a showy display in fall, as the dying leaves change to shades of yellow and orange before dropping. The long-lasting, showy, yellow flowers appear in early spring and are quite fragrant. However, they may occasionally be injured by cold temperatures (-10 degrees F.). These blooms are followed by the production of inconspicuous, green (turning black) fruits which persist on the tree.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Hamamelis mollis*

Pronunciation: ham-uh-MEE-liss MAW-liss

Common name(s): Chinese Witch-Hazel

Family: *Hamamelidaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 6 through 8A (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: container or above-ground planter; recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; specimen; no proven urban tolerance

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

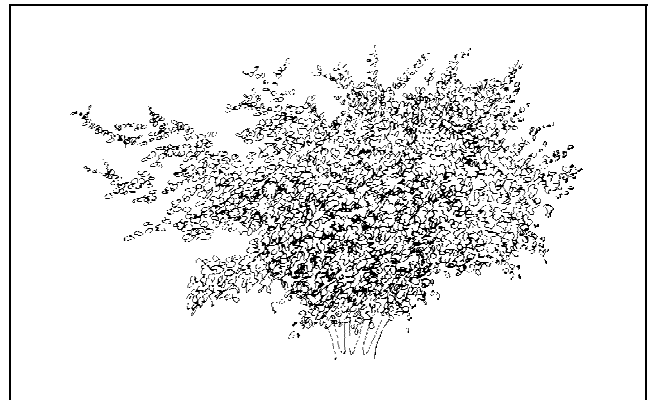


Figure 1. Young Chinese Witch-Hazel.

DESCRIPTION

Height: 10 to 20 feet

Spread: 12 to 18 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette

Crown shape: spreading; upright

Crown density: open

Growth rate: slow

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: sinuate; undulate

Leaf shape: obovate; orbiculate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches; 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: yellow

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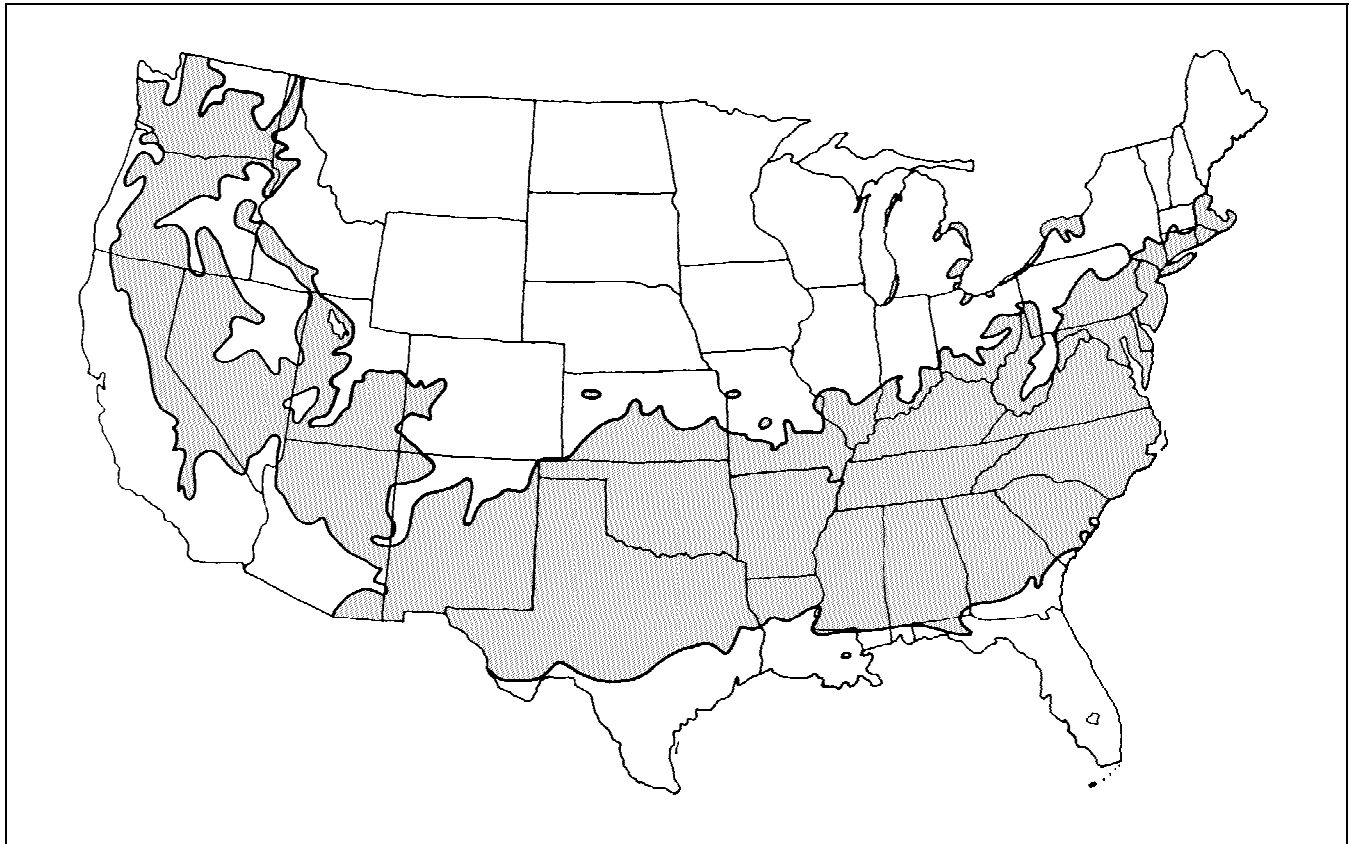


Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Fall characteristic: showy

Flower

Flower color: yellow

Flower characteristics: pleasant fragrance; showy; winter flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: irregular; round

Fruit length: .5 to 1 inch

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit color: black

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: bark is thin and easily damaged from mechanical impact; droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; not particularly showy; no thorns

Pruning requirement: requires pruning to develop strong structure

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: gray

Current year twig thickness: thin

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in the shade; tree grows in full sun

Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; acidic; well-drained

Drought tolerance: moderate

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem

Winter interest: tree has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers

Outstanding tree: tree has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

Invasive potential: little, if any, potential at this time

Pest resistance: no pests are normally seen on the tree

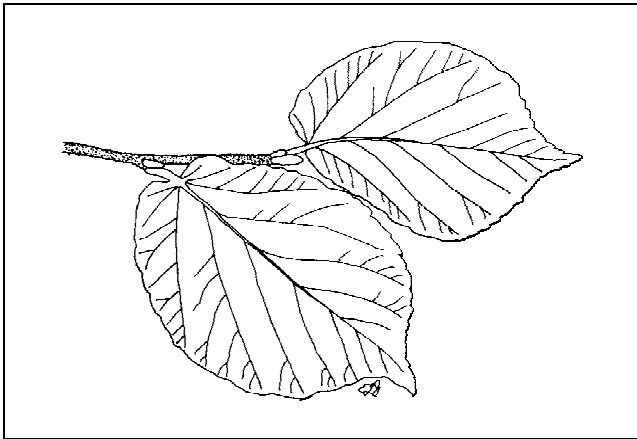


Figure 3. Foliage of Chinese Witch-Hazel.

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Plant Chinese Witch-Hazel near a deck or patio or in the lawn or low ground cover as a specimen. Space branches apart on a single trunk so they can properly develop their horizontal, layered habit. The lowest branch can be located one or two feet from the ground to form a thick canopy all the way to the ground, or if planted close to a walk or patio, five to seven feet up to allow for pedestrian clearance beneath the crown. Trees can also be purchased and trained with multiple trunks for planting in open areas as specimens. This is an attractive, versatile small tree which could be used more in the urban landscape due to the small size and ornamental habit.

Chinese Witch-Hazel should be grown in full sun or partial shade on well-drained, moist, acid soils. Trees grown in the partial shade are very nice, developing an open crown, but do not become leggy and unkempt like some other trees in partial shade. Nice specimens can be found in clay soils, even those which dry out for a period of time in the summer.

Propagation is by seed or cuttings.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases appear to be serious, although the plant has not been widely planted or tested.